

United Nations Study on Violence against Children

Response to questionnaire received from the
Government of the Republic of SINGAPORE

**UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN**

QUESTIONNAIRE TO GOVERNMENTS

- 1. Describe any developments with respect to violence against children which have resulted from your country's acceptance of international human rights instruments including, for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols, the Parlemo Protocol or regional human rights instruments. Provide information on cases concerning violence against children in which your country's courts or tribunals have referred to international or regional human rights standards.**

Answer

- 1.1 The civil rights and freedom of children, which includes the protection of children in Singapore, is provided for in the Singapore Constitution and other legislative instruments such as the Children and Young Person's Act and the Women's Charter and the Penal Code.
- 1.2 Singapore's laws and practices reflect the principle of ensuring the best interests of the child. They are also consistent with Singapore's commitment and obligations under international conventions that we are party to.
- 1.3 In 1995, following Singapore's accession to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, an Inter-Ministry Committee was convened to coordinate policies and programmes concerning children, including but not limited to the area of violence against children. The committee comprises representatives from various government agencies that deals with policies that affect children, including the Ministry of Law, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Community Development and Sports (MCDS), Ministry of Manpower, Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence as well as the Attorney-General's Chambers.
- 1.4 The National Standards for Protection of Children, launched in 2002, outline the framework for the management of child protection and establishes a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various constituents of the child protection system in Singapore. The standards also guide child protection professionals in the discharge of their duties. With the standards, the public can appreciate how child protection services are carried out promptly and in the best interests of the child. More information regarding the various legislations, including the act themselves, can be found at the following website <http://www.statutes.agc.gov.sg>. Information on the National Standards on Child Protection can be found at <http://www.mcds.gov.sg>.

2. Describe how forms of violence against children are addressed in your country's constitution, legislation and subsidiary legislation, and, where appropriate, customary law.

Answer

2.1 The treatment of violence is addressed in various statutes, including, but not limited to the Children and Young Persons Act, Women's Charter, Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code. These are addressed in greater detail in Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.6.

3. Provide details of any specific legislative provisions on:

- **Prevention of all forms of physical, sexual and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, and sexual abuse;**
- **Protection of children from all forms of violence;**
- **Redress, including compensation, for child victims of violence;**
- **Penalties for perpetrators of violence against children;**
- **Reintegration and rehabilitation of child victims of violence**

Answer

Children and Young Persons Act

3.1 The protection of children from all forms of violence is provided for under the Children and Young Persons Act. The Act criminalises the ill-treatment, sexual exploitation and trafficking of a child or young person and institutes punishment on perpetrators of violence against children. This piece of legislation also confers on the Director of Social Welfare the role of protector of the child, as well as the statutory power to remove a child or young person to a place of safety for his or her protection and welfare.

3.2 The Children and Young Persons Act was revised in 1993, incorporating enhanced penalties for child abuse. The most recent amendments to the Act in 2001 provide greater protection and enhance the well-being of children and young persons who are neglected, abused or destitute and those who are placed in residential institutions. Recognising the importance of parents' role in the protection of child victims, the courts can ask parents to receive psychological assessment and counselling.

Women's Charter

3.3 The Women's Charter protects female children from offences relating to prostitution and offers protection to girls in need of refuge. These offences are in addition to the range of offences as prescribed in the Penal Code, such as incest and statutory rape.

3.4 The Women's Charter spells out the responsibility of parents over their children who are minors or who are dependants. It also provides for the protection of women and girls against abuse and exploitation. The Women's Charter was

amended in 1996 to give greater protection to family members against family violence, including children.

Penal Code

- 3.5 The Penal Code provides for, among other things, the imposition of imprisonment and/or the imposition of a fine for persons who abuse and neglect children.
- 3.6 The punishment is life imprisonment or imprisonment of up to 10 years plus a fine.
- 3.7 Under the Penal Code, *infanticide*, defined in Section 310 of the Penal Code as the act of causing the death of a child under the age of 12 months by any woman who, by any wilful act or omission, causes the death of her said child, but who, at the time of the act or omission, had an unbalanced mind by reason of her not having fully recovered from the effect of giving birth to the child, is punishable for up to 10 years in prison.
4. **Indicate whether any specific legislative provisions address all forms of violence including physical, sexual and psychological violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment and sexual exploitation against children which take place in:**
- **The family/ home;**
 - **Schools and pre-school care and education (both formal and non-formal, state and private)**
 - **Military schools;**
 - **Institutions including care, residential, health and mental health;**
 - **The context of law and public order enforcement including in detention facilities or prisons;**
 - **The neighbourhood, street and the community, including in rural areas;**
 - **The workplace (informal and formal);**
 - **Sports and sporting facilities**

Answer

- 4.1 The legislative provisions highlighted in Paragraphs **3.1-3.6** are applicable in the above settings.
- 4.2 In addition, the Women's Charter gives power to the Court to issue a Personal Protection Order that prevents a family member from committing family violence against another family member. The definition of family member here includes children. Section 65 of the Charter provides that the Court can issue a Personal Protection Order on the principle of 'balance of probability', rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt', that violence has occurred or is likely to occur.

- 5. Indicate if corporal punishment of children, in any setting, including in the family, is explicitly prohibited in your legal system. Provide details of any legal defences available to those who administer corporal punishment to children, including in the family. Provide information on penalties applicable to those who administer corporal punishment to children, including in the family.**

Answer

- 5.1 Singapore does not promote corporal punishment. We have in place legislation, guidelines and public education programmes that discourage the use of corporal punishment as a means of child discipline.
- 5.2 The Child Care Centres Regulations specifically prohibits corporal punishment. Also prohibited are harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any kind, deprivation of meals, isolation and restriction of movement as forms of disciplining children. Foster parents are not allowed to use physical punishment on foster children. Guidelines are given to children's homes to discipline without resorting to corporal punishment.
- 5.3 With regard to discipline in schools, counselling towards responsibility is practised as an alternative to punishment. As a last resort, punishment may be meted out judiciously to errant male pupils, and only by the principal or a teacher authorized by him/her. If parents are of the view that the punishment has been excessive, they can report the matter to the Ministry of Education, which will look into their complaints and take the appropriate action against errant school personnel. Under no circumstances are female pupils subjected to corporal punishment.
- 5.4 Parents are given information and skills on appropriate methods of discipline such as withdrawal of privileges or "time-out". Some parents may judiciously use light caning as a mode of discipline.

- 6. Provide information on whether the penal code permits corporal punishment and/or capital punishment as a sentence for crimes committed by under 18 year olds.**

Answer

- 6.1 If a young offender is charged and convicted, the court will sentence the juvenile within the limits of the law. Under the Children and Young Persons Act, only the High Court can sentence a child or young person to corporal punishment and caning as a judicial sentence by the High Court is for males only. It is only statutorily permitted for a short list of very serious offences which generally include severe physical violence to the victims.
- 6.2 Under the Criminal Procedure Code, no person 18 years and below is liable to be punished with the capital penalty.

- 7. Provide details on whether bullying/hazing and sexual harassment are explicitly addressed by legislation.**

Answer

- 7.1 These specific acts are not in themselves criminalised, but they inevitably comprise other criminal offences. For example, sexual harassment often includes the offences of threatening to injure a person's reputation, or outraging of modesty of a woman, which are offences under the Penal Code.

- 8. Provide information on the way in which harmful or violent traditional practices, including but not limited to female genital mutilation, child marriage or honour crimes are addressed in your country.**

Answer

- 8.1 As cited in Singapore's Initial Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, there are no known cases of harmful or violent traditions in Singapore. Female circumcision is very rare and private to a Muslim family in their choice of practice for girls. Female circumcisions, as practiced in Singapore, do not mutilate the female genitalia. These procedures take place in a sterile, private environment, and are performed by qualified female doctors.

- 9. Provide information on the applicability of specific provisions to address all forms of violence against children to non-citizens and stateless children, including asylum seekers and displaced children. If specific provisions do not apply to such children, provide details of protection offered to them.**

Answer

- 9.1 Legislative provisions that address all forms of violence against children are applicable to children resident in Singapore.

- 10. Provide information on any difference in the definition of violence and the applicable legal framework according to:**
- **The sex or sexual orientation of the victim and/ or of the perpetrator;**
 - **The age of the victim and/ or the perpetrator;**
 - **The relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, including, but not limited to infanticide, sexual violence in marriage, incest and sexual abuse within the family, and physical chastisement.**

Answer

Sex / Sexual Orientation of Victim and/or Perpetrator

- 10.1 The offence of rape under Section 375 of the Penal Code can only be committed by a man, against a woman.

- 10.2 An analogous crime of carnal intercourse against the order of nature (under Section 377 of the Penal Code) is available to punish forced carnal intercourse other than rape. This does not discriminate between sexes or sexual orientations of the victim or perpetrator.
- 10.3 Section 376A defines incest such that it can only be committed by a person upon a member of the opposite sex.

Age of Victim and/or Perpetrator

- 10.4 There are legal provisions that protect females under the age of 14 years against rape.
- 10.5 Section 4 of the Children and Young Persons Act states that if any person above the age of 18 who has custody, charge or care of any young person, wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes the child or young person to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned or exposed, in a manner likely to cause that child or young person unnecessary suffering or injury to his health (including injury to or loss of sight, hearing, a limb or organ of the body, and any mental derangement), that person shall be guilty of an offence.
- 10.6 Where the perpetrator is a child, Section 82 of the Penal Code provides that nothing is an offence which is done by a child under 7 years of age. Where a perpetrator is above 7 but below the age of 12, a legal defence under Section 83 of the Penal Code is available (that he has not attained sufficient maturity of understanding to judge the nature and consequences of his conduct). Section 376A of the Penal Code is structured such that a female below the age of 16 is not legally capable of committing incest.

Infanticide

- 10.7 The response in Paragraph 3.7 applies to this Section.

Sexual violence within marriage

- 10.8 Section 4 of the Children and Young Person's Act stipulates many circumstances (e.g., "at risk of being ill-treated") that are wide enough to include various forms of sexual violence in marriage, as a ground for a child or young person to be deemed "in need of care or protection". This triggers a protection regime for the child. Section 5 of the Children and Young Person's Act also defines sexual abuse of a child or young person as one of many forms of "ill-treatment".
- 10.9 The protection order that can be made under Section 65 of the Women's Charter can also be applied the sexual violence within marriage. Please refer to Paragraph 4.2 for more information.

Incest

10.10 Sections 376B and 376C of the Penal Code states that, in the case of incest, punishment may differ between the genders. Where a man's female victim is below 14 years of age, the maximum term of imprisonment is extended from 5 years to 14 years.

Sexual abuse within family

10.11 The Children and Young Persons Act provides for the removal of abused children to a place of safety even before they can be brought before a court for the making of an order for their care and custody. It also provides for the taking of a destitute child to a place of safety. Removal of a child to a foster mother or welfare home is done only as a last resort and to ensure the safety and best interest of the child. For more information, please refer to Paragraph 10.7.

11. Provide information on any recent comprehensive review of the legal framework to address violence against children.

Answer

11.1 The Singapore Government regularly reviews the legislative framework, including that which addresses violence against children. The most recent review of the legal framework pertaining to violence against children was completed as part of Singapore's review and amendments to the Children and Young Person's Act in 2001. For more information, please refer to Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.2.

12. Provide information on any studies and surveys which have been undertaken to assess the impact of legal measures to address violence against children.

Answer

12.1 A study entitled "Divorcing Couples: A Profile Analysis" was published in March 2003. This study considers the issue of violence against children within the wider context of analysing divorces generally.

13. Identify those parts of the court structure in your country tasked with addressing violence against children. Indicate if your family or juvenile courts have specific responsibility for this issue.

Answer

13.1 The Family and Juvenile Justice Centre is the branch of the Subordinate Courts that has specific responsibility for the issue of violence against children. Its current practice includes consolidating the divorce, maintenance and family violence issues for unified handling. Notwithstanding this, the Supreme Court has original and appellate jurisdiction over these issues.

14. Provide information on any legislatively defined minimum age required for valid consent to sexual activity. Is that age different for girls and boys? Is this age different in respect of heterosexual and homosexual activities?

Answer

- 14.1 The minimum age for consent to sexual activity, according to the Penal Code, is 14 years old for females, with the exception of sexual activity within a marriage where the female is above 13 years.
- 14.2 Under the Women's Charter, any person who causes or encourages the prostitution of, or the commission of unlawful sexual intercourse with, or of an indecent assault on, a girl below the age of 16 years is liable of conviction.
- 14.3 Under the Women's Charter, any woman or girl below the age of 21 believed to be being trained or used for immoral purposes or frequents any brothel or is habitually in the company of prostitutes or brothel keepers or procuresses or persons employed or living in brothels or persons directly interested in the business carried on in brothels or by prostitutes may be removed to a place of safety and be temporarily detained until an inquiry has been made.

15. Provide information on the minimum age of marriage for women and men.

Answer

- 15.1 Under the Women's Charter, a marriage solemnised in Singapore between persons either of whom is below the minimum age of 18 shall be void, unless a special marriage licence is granted by the Minister for Community Development and Sports. One of the main conditions of the licence is the consent of the appropriate persons. The second schedule of the Women's Charter states the people whom consent are required, depending on various circumstances.

16. Provide information on legislation and other measures to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including through prostitution and other unlawful sexual activities. Provide details on means to ensure that child victims of such exploitation are not criminalized. Provide information on legislation or other measures to prohibit all forms of sale or trafficking in children, including by their parents.

Answer

- 16.1 Singapore does not tolerate offences related to trafficking of children. Under Section 12 of the Children and Young Persons Act, any person found guilty of an offence involving the unlawful transfer of possession, custody or control of a child shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four years.

- 16.2 Under Section 141 of the Women’s Charter, any person who buys, sells, procures, traffics in, or brings into or takes out of Singapore for the purpose of such traffic, and whether or not for the purpose of present or subsequent prostitution, any woman or girl, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years and shall be liable to a fine not exceeding S\$10,000.
- 16.3 Besides laws, there are programmes and services available to children who are victims of trafficking. There are agencies that provide medical services, counselling, psychological and psychiatric services and residential care for children. These services and programmes are provided by governmental and non-governmental agencies.
- 16.4 Singapore is a party to the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and the Final Protocol (1950).
- 17. Provide information on legislation and other measures to prohibit the production, possession and dissemination of child pornography. In particular, please provide information on any controls on pornography produced and/or disseminated via the internet.**

Answer

- 17.1 Child pornography is generally treated no differently from other forms of pornography. Pornography itself is curtailed by Sections 292 to 294 of the Penal Code, as well as the Films Act and the Undesirable Publications Act generally. The Undesirable Publications Act also deals with pornography disseminated by the Internet. Section 4(2)(a)(ii) of the Undesirable Publications Act particularly addresses the exploitation of the nudity of children as one consideration in determining whether a publication, online or otherwise, is objectionable within the meaning of the Undesirable Publications Act.
- 17.2 A class licensing regime under the Broadcasting Act is used to exercise indirect control and influence over internet service providers by requiring them to comply with Codes of Practice. This is administered by the Media Development Authority of Singapore, a statutory regulator. Clause 4(2)(d) of its Internet Code of Practice singles out the depiction of “a person who, or appears to be, under 16 years of age in sexual activity, in a sexually provocative manner or in any other offensive manner” as a factor for considering whether material is prohibited.
- 18. Provide information on any legislation or guidelines to protect children from injurious information and material transmitted through the media, Internet, videos, electronic games, etc.**

Answer

- 18.1 Section 293 of the Penal Code specifically prohibits the sale of obscene books to persons under the age of 20 years. The Media Development Authority of Singapore also actively encourages public awareness and supports the Parents Advisory Group for the Internet, which was formed in 1999.
- 18.2 The National Internet Advisory Committee, who advises the Media Development Authority on Internet policies, has set up a Cyber Wellness Task Force to look into ways to create a healthy Net culture among Singaporeans, particularly the young. These institutions provide guidance to young people and adults on using the internet safely. The government is also working with Internet Service Providers in Singapore to provide optional family access networks that parents can subscribe to for their children. These networks filter out pornographic as well as other undesirable sites.
- 19. Provide information on legislation, regulations or administrative directives requiring reporting of all forms of violence against and abuse of children in all settings to appropriate bodies. If reporting legislation, regulations or administrative directives exist, please indicate whether all citizens are required to report, or whether obligation falls on certain professional groups only. Provide details of any sanctions for non-reporting.**

Answer

- 19.1 Singapore does not institute mandatory reporting for suspected cases of abuse and violence. Singapore's emphasis in this area has been on ensuring that people with regular contact with children know how to detect and report child abuse. In Singapore, the polyclinics, childcare centres, kindergartens and schools are regularly given information on how to detect and report abuse. In 2003, a child abuse manual was launched to further strengthen inter-agency collaboration. These public education strategies are effective in preventing and detecting abuse in children.
- 20. Provide information on any complaints procedures relating to all forms of violence against children perpetrated in:**
- **The family/ home;**
 - **The family/ home;**
 - **Schools and pre-school care and education (both formal and non-formal, state and private)**
 - **Military schools;**
 - **Institutions including care, residential, health and mental health;**
 - **The context of law and public order enforcement including in detention facilities or prisons;**
 - **The neighbourhood, street and the community, including in rural areas;**
 - **The workplace (informal and formal);**
 - **Sporting and sporting facilities.**

Answer

- 20.1 Any child or young person who wishes to lodge a complaint can call or email the government agency concerned. There is a quality service manager in every agency whose job is to register all complaints and respond to them. This arrangement ensures that the complainant receives a speedy response.
- 20.2 Depending on the nature of the problem, children can approach specific agencies for specific issues. For example, any one can call the Child Protection Service hotline (at 1800-258-6378) or Policy Division Headquarters and Neighbourhood Police Centres (at 999) for issues related to child abuse or neglect. Members of the public can complain about any allegation of abuse or child labour to the Labour Relations Department of the Ministry of Manpower (at 6438-5122). Children in institutional homes are informed that they can lodge complaints with an independent Board of Visitors, whose members visit the Homes regularly on rotation.
- 20.3 To make a complaint, Children and other members of the public need not know the particular contact number or the department in question. All government agencies are linked up to a central communication system. This means that a child can approach any government agency to lodge a complaint about any matter. The complaint will be channelled to the correct agency.
- 20.4 Apart from making a complaint to government agencies, children can lodge a complaint to the media, by calling any of the news hotlines.
- 20.5 Any child or young person who has a complaint can also speak to Non-Government Organisations via several hotlines. These are: Tinkle Friend Counselling Service (at 1800-274-4788), Touch Youth hotline (at 1800-377-2252), Family Service Centre hotline (at 1800-838-0100) and Samaritans of Singapore hotline (at 1800-255-0000). These hotlines are publicised in schools and in the community.
- 20.6 In the case of very young children, they can approach their carer, teacher or family member. Children may also contact the Inter-Ministry Committee or National Council of Social Service (at 6210-2500).
- 20.7 Other channels include: Ministry of Community Development and Sports enquiry hotline (at 1800-258-6001) and email (at mcds_email@mcds.gov.sg), the National Youth Council website (at <http://www.nyc.gov.sg>) and the Feedback Unit (at feedback_unit@mcds.gov.sg).
- 20.8 All investigations into complaints would involve social workers and child care teachers, who may be required to attend discussions and case conferences on the child's welfare. This will assist in the police investigation of the child abuse case.

- 21. Indicate whether children or persons acting on their behalf can access these procedures. Indicate whether legal aid is available to facilitate submission of complaints, and the circumstances in which legal aid will be made available.**

Answer

21.1 The complaint procedures in Paragraphs **20.1 - 20.8** can be accessed by any child or person acting on their behalf. In the instances where the court is involved, legal aid is available to children or persons acting on their behalf if they meet the eligibility requirements for legal aid.

- 22. Describe steps which have been taken to raise awareness of possibilities to submit complaints about violence against children.**

Answer

22.1 The government recognises that public education is important to deal with child abuse, neglect and family violence and works closely with the Courts, Family Service Centres, crisis centres and other organizations to promote awareness of child abuse and family violence. Information booklets and pamphlets on family violence are developed and disseminated to hospitals, community centres, lawyers and others for their information and reference. The Ministry of Community Development and Sports conducts talks in schools and pre-school facilities such as child care centres on the signs and symptoms of child abuse and the protocol for the referral and management of cases.

22.2 Besides the government, Non-Government Organisations are also active in raising public awareness of child abuse and of the services available to help these children. All relevant information is available on the following websites:
<http://www.mcads.gov.sg>, <http://www.familytown.gov.sg> and <http://www.aboutfamilylife.org.sg>.

- 23. Provide information on any special procedural or evidentiary rules which may apply in proceedings with respect to violence against children.**

Answer

Procedural Rules

23.1 Section 35 of the Children and Young Person's Act prohibits the publication or broadcasting of identifying information of any child involved in proceedings in any court, and penalises this with a fine of up to \$2,000 and for second or subsequent convictions, \$10,000. Section 7 of the Subordinate Courts Act allows a subordinate court to make an order prohibiting such identifying actions, the contravention of which attracts a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment of up to 12 months, or both. This Section also allows a court to hold proceedings in camera if it is in the interests of justice to do so.

- 23.2 The High Court and the Court of Appeal have similar powers under Section 8 of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act to make orders and hold proceedings in camera, although the maximum imprisonment term in this case is 3 years.
- 23.3 A witness below the age of 16 is allowed to give evidence via live video or live television links, in criminal proceedings. However, the court must be satisfied that it is expedient in the interests of justice to do so, and the proceedings must involve certain specific offences. These include offences under Part II of the Children and Young Person's Act, as well as offences involving sexual and other physical assault.

Evidentiary Rules

- 23.4 Section 120 of the Evidence Act provides that:

“All persons shall be competent to testify unless the court considers that they are prevented from understanding the questions put to them or from giving rational answers to those questions by tender years, extreme old age, disease, whether of body or mind, or any other cause of the same kind.”

A child, like any other person, is therefore competent until he is proven to fall into any of the disqualifying categories. The courts weigh the circumstances as a whole to determine whether a child can give evidence and if so, how much weight to place on such evidence. Apart from the foregoing, there is no special rule requiring corroboration of evidence of child witnesses. A conviction on the uncorroborated testimony of a child witness is therefore possible if it is sufficiently reliable in itself to convict an accused person.

- 24. Provide information on the usual outcome of complaints of violence against children (e.g. Compensation, punishment of perpetrators, perpetrator rehabilitation, family therapy).**

Answer

- 24.1 All complaints of violence against children are thoroughly investigated by the relevant authorities, including the police and child protection officers.
- 24.2 Perpetrators found guilty shall be liable to conviction and subject to a fine not exceeding \$20,000 or to imprisonment of up to 7 years, or both (in the case of death of the child) and to a fine not exceeding \$4,000 and imprisonment of up to 4 years, or both (in any other case).
- 24.3 The Children and Young Persons Act also provides for individuals found guilty of committing abuse against children to be referred for mandatory counselling. This aims to stop physical, emotional or verbal abuse in the family by helping the perpetrator find other ways of dealing with stress, anger or conflict without

resorting to hurt or violence. It provides help and support victims of violence who need safety and protection from further hurt.

- 25. Provide information on the usual outcome of legal proceedings in which children and juveniles are found guilty of perpetrating violence (e.g. Imprisonment, corporal punishment, community service, perpetrator rehabilitation, family therapy)**

Answer

- 25.1 The juvenile justice system places emphasis on restorative justice, rehabilitation and reintegration of the child into family and society, focusing on the best interest of the child and with institutionalisation considered only as a last resort.
- 25.2 When a juvenile is charged in court, there is a wide variety of community based and residential orders which the Court may make (such as supervision, community service, probation, detention centres, etc.). The Court may also undertake some pre-court measures such as family conferencing which provide an opportunity for the juvenile to understand the seriousness of the offending behaviour, address the issue of family and community accountability, contribute to the cautioning process if possible, and make possible reparation compensation to the victim.
- 25.3 Family and community involvement are essential components of the rehabilitation process and the reintegration of children into society. Parents are involved actively regardless of whether the juvenile is placed on a community based or residential programme. The Government works closely with civic, grassroots and other relevant organisations to develop a network of services to supplement and support the rehabilitation process and provide a continuum of services and programmes.

- 26. Are there any Governmental authorities, structures and mechanisms, including at federal, state/ provincial, municipal and local level which are currently responsible for addressing violence against children?**

If YES, identify these authorities, structures and mechanisms and describe how coordination is ensured.

Answer

- 26.1 The Ministry of Community Development and Sports is the lead agency for child protection and welfare. The Ministry of Community Development and Sports works in close collaboration with the police, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower, the Attorney-General's Chambers, the Juvenile Court and NGOs in the protection of children and young persons. There are inter-agency working groups such as the National Family Violence network and

National Family Violence Dialogue Group comprising representatives from relevant government agencies, the voluntary sector and concerned individuals which look at the management of family violence in Singapore, the protocols and the coordination of agencies involved in the management of family violence cases, and the implementation of nationwide campaigns and public education on family violence. There is also an Inter-Ministry Working Group on Child Abuse which oversees the coordination and management of child abuse among government agencies and the prevention of child abuse in Singapore.

26.2 A Child Abuse Protection Team was set up in 1996 under Ministry of Community Development and Sports. The team consists of professionals from different disciplines such as social workers, psychologists, doctors and psychiatrists. The objectives of this team are:

- (i) to enhance the investigation and management of child protection cases for the better protection of children;
- (ii) to assess protective and risk factors for the children;
- (iii) to discuss and develop care and protection plans for the children; and
- (iv) to provide a platform for consultation and guidance for staff handling child protection cases.

26.3 As mentioned in Paragraph 1.4, a publication detailing the National Standards for Child Protection was released in 2002.

27. Is there a lead Government authority tasked with responsibility for addressing violence against children?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

27.1 The Ministry of Community Development and Sports, as the lead agency for child welfare and protection, is tasked with the responsibility of addressing violence against children. For more information, please refer to Paragraph 26.1.

28. Are specific financial and/ or human resources allocated by your country to address violence generally?

If YES, indicate the extent of these allocations.

Answer

- 28.1 Ministry of Community Development and Sports, Singapore Police Force, Ministry of Health, Prisons Department and the Family Court have been working together to tackle family violence in Singapore. All these agencies are also part of the National Family Violence Networking System which offers a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach to help address the problem of violence in the family especially against children since July 1996. Within each agency, financial resources are allocated to enable them to carry out their responsibilities.
- 28.2 As Police are often the first point of contact with victims of family violence, they continue to play an important role in the management of family violence cases. Specifically, the following four processes are in support of the National Family Violence Networking System:
- (i) Provide emergency response for prevention, detection and prosecution of perpetrators of violence against children;
 - (ii) Provide advice on applying for a Protection Order from the Family Court and its subsequent enforcement;
 - (iii) Referrals of a victim/perpetrator to local Family Service Centre(s) for counselling and other social assistance; and
 - (iv) Referral of victims for medical attention.
- 28.3 Currently, there are 31 Neighbourhood Police Centres (NPC) operating round-the-clock in Singapore. Each NPC comprises about 80 Police officers serving an average of 100,000 residents within its area of jurisdiction. Any member of the public can call the emergency line or lodge a police report of family violence at any NPC.
- 28.4 Significant amount of resources is also allocated to Public Education efforts to educate the public regarding the issue of child abuse.

29. Does your country allocate specific financial and/ or human resources to activities to address violence against children?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

29.1 Ministry of Community Development and Sports, as the lead agency that address violence against children devotes a significant amount of resources to such activities. These include resources used for investigations of incidents relating to child abuse as well as rehabilitative interventions for child victims and their perpetrators.

30. Do international or bilateral donors provide resources to your country for activities to address violence against children?

If YES, indicate the extent of these resources and the way in which they are used.

Answer

30.1 No

31. Does your country provide any assistance to other countries' efforts to respond to the problem of violence against children?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

31.1 Singapore continues to contribute actively to discussions at the annual United Nations General Assembly, being deeply concerned with social issues including violence against children, and has given its support to organisations such as the UNDP, UNICEF and UNIFEM.

32. If your country has a national human rights institution, such as a human rights commission or ombudsman, or a child-specific human rights institution, does it have any role or competence in the area of violence against children, including receiving complaints?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

32.1 There are no special institutions or national machinery with the specific responsibility for overseeing the implementation of human rights. However, the Ministry of Community Development and Sports is the national focal point for the welfare and protection, rehabilitation and development of children. The Ministry of Community Development and Sports works closely with all Government Ministries, the Juvenile Court, the Family Court, children's organisations, non-governmental and other agencies on issues relating to the welfare and interest of children.

33. Are there any particular parliamentary structures (for example special committees) to address violence against children?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

33.1 Currently Singapore has no particular parliamentary structures set specifically to address violence against children.

34. Have there been any recent parliamentary initiatives to address violence against children?

If YES, provide details.

Answer

34.1 Parliament passed amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act in 2001. Please refer to Paragraphs 3.1 – 3.2 for more details.

35. Describe significant civil society initiatives addressing violence against children in your country, including the types of institutions involved (such as academic institutions, professional associations, women’s associations, student associations, community-based groups, faith-based groups, child and youth-led groups, trade unions, employer’s organisations, national non-governmental organisations, international non-governmental organisations) and major activities engaged in (including advocacy, awareness raising, research, prevention, rehabilitation and treatment of children harmed by violence, provision of services, provision of resources).

Answer

35.1 Singapore has an active civil society, part of which contributes to raising awareness for children’s rights and related issues. The work of some of these organisations is detailed below.

35.2 The National Council of Social Service, which is the national co-coordinating body for member Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) providing direct social services in Singapore, plays a prominent role in advocating for the needs of children. In family violence management, the Council’s role lies in service development, funding, networking, publicity, training and the development of service standards.

35.3 The National Youth Council, which is the coordinating body for youth affairs, also undertakes coordination in the area of violence and youth crime.

35.4 AWARE, the Association of Women for Action and Research, lobbies for the rights of women and children. For example, the society argues for an equal view of both males and females as responsible for nurturing a child in its proposals for more equal policies involving sick child leave and childcare leave. These proposed initiatives work towards ensuring that adequate care is provided for the child.

35.5 Singapore Children’s Society is an agency dedicated to promoting the welfare children that has been around for the past 50 years. Programs and activities

- carried out by the society range from running a home for malnourished children to a hotline for children. Singapore Children's Society also has a Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Standing Committee. Over the years, they have also released a number of publications regarding child abuse and neglect.
- 35.6 TRANS Centre is another voluntary welfare organisation that is active in promoting child welfare. One of the key program service provided the agency is the Stop Abuse in Families programme. This programme allows victims of family violence to apply for their Personal Protection Order through the centre. This service makes the process of applying for Protection Orders less daunting and more accessible for victims of family violence.
- 35.7 Family Service Centres, which are key focal points of the delivery of social services across Singapore, also provide programmes and services in the area of prevention, rehabilitation and treatment of violence against children. The Family Centres are operated by voluntary welfare organisations, with some financial assistance from the government.
- 35.8 The above are just examples of civil society participation in the issue of violence against children. Many other Non-Government Organisations in Singapore are also actively involved in addressing the issue of violence against children.
- 36. Describe the support provided by your Government for these activities and the efforts made to coordinate civil society and government initiatives.**

Answer

- 36.1 The government harnesses the participation of civil society in the management of family violence and in public education. Funding support is extended to the community-based social service agencies like the family service centres for their work in family violence. Specialised training for social service professionals is also supported by the government. Support is often extended to voluntary welfare organisations that lobby for family violence issues, particularly to their public education campaigns.
- 36.2 The government plays the role of providing the resources for infrastructure and service development. Resources provided include land and capital funding for facilities. The government also provide funding for social services, the piloting of new programmes and for capability building measures, such as training and IT systems, to increase the effectiveness of service delivery.
- 37. Describe the role played by the media in addressing violence against children.**

Answer

- 37.1 The Ministry of Community Development and Sports launched a newsletter , “Networkz - Agencies Uniting Against Family Violence,” in October 2003. The newsletter aims to provide agencies with updates in the regional family violence networking system including events, programmes, trends, training and resources available, as well as to share the challenges and successes in the field. It is hoped that this initiative will further strengthen inter-agency linkages and spur the agencies to serve the families affected by violence even better.
- 37.2 The Singapore Government also leverages on the media for Public Education efforts against violence. The booklet, “Love our Children – Prevent Child Abuse” was produced to provide more information on child abuse and its prevention.
- 37.3 The Singapore Police Force also runs a regular series known as Crime Watch which highlights various aspects of crime and violence in Singapore.
- 38. Provide information on the involvement and consultation of children in designing activities, and in implementation and monitoring of programmes and policies to address violence against them. Provide details, including ages and other details of the children involved.**

Answer

- 38.1 The Singapore government's approach to decision-making is an open and consultative one. Since becoming signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the views of children have been increasingly sought for decisions that concern them. The respective organisers and drivers of programmes and policies leverage on various methods of consultation to obtain the views of children in the design, implementation and monitoring of their programs.
- 38.2 At a wider level, the government recently launched an online consultation portal (at <http://www.feedback.gov.sg>). This is an accessible and user-friendly avenue for the public to comment on government policies and initiatives. Since its launch, the consultation portal has seen many children of various ages, including those from primary schools, contributing their views and ideas to decision-makers.
- 39. Describe the involvement, if any, of children in designing special procedural or evidentiary rules applying in court proceedings with respect to hearings concerning violence against children. Provide details including ages and other details of the children involved.**

Answer

- 39.1 The consultations with children as set out in Paragraph **38.1** are applicable.

40. Describe the amount and type of resources made available to support children's participation in activities to address violence against children.

Answer

- 40.1 Various government agencies such as the Singapore Police Force, the Subordinate Courts and the Ministry of Community Development and Sports would have resources available for projects involving children in the area of violence against children.
- 40.2 The National Youth Council provides resources to help youths initiate and implement programmes that are beneficial to the community and society. This includes any activities that address violence against children.
- 40.3 The National Youth Council also oversees the management of projects under the auspices of the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime, which also funds programmes concerning youth crime and violence.

41. Does your Government have a comprehensive policy concerning violence against children?

Answer

- 41.1 The Singapore takes a holistic approach when addressing violence against children. This extends from how we define violence or abuse against children to the various efforts to prevent and rehabilitate.

Legal

- 41.2 The Singapore Government recognizes that violence/abuse takes many forms. The legal definitions of abuse include physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and emotional/psychological abuse. Please refer to Paragraphs **3.1 – 3.7** for more information.

Social Assistance and Protection

- 41.3 The management of violence against children is a multi-agency effort, with Ministry of Community Development and Sports as the main agency. The other agencies include the Police, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Manpower, Attorney-General's Chambers, the Juvenile Court and Non-Government Organisations. Please refer to Paragraphs **1.4 & 26.1** for more information.

Prevention

- 41.4 Information booklets and pamphlets on family violence are developed and disseminated to hospitals, community centres, lawyers and others for their information and reference should they come in contact with such cases. Child abuse pamphlets and booklets aimed at raising awareness was developed and disseminated in 1999 and 2001.

- 41.5 Singapore promotes family life education for all. A wide range of family life programmes, covering children, parents and grandparents are easily accessible to the schools, workplace and community. A comprehensive family life education portal is also developed to deliver information and services.
- 41.6 The parenting programmes enhance parenting skills for those with children of various ages, and highlight parents' responsibilities in values transmission and child development. Such programmes serve as one of the preventive measures for violence against children.
- 41.7 Schools, kindergartens and child care centres are expected to inform Ministry of Community Development and Sports and the Police if there is any suspicion that children under their care are subjected to abuse.

Rehabilitation and Reintegration

- 41.8 Victims are provided with psychological intervention where necessary. The focus of therapy or counselling is to help victims to integrate and make sense of their experience in a way appropriate to their developmental stage. The National Standards for the Protection of Children spells out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the delivery of services to victims of abuse.
- 41.9 Agencies such as the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVE) also provide programmes for children who have witnessed violence in their lives.

42. Does your Government deliver, or provide direct support for delivery by other agencies, of specific programmes aimed at preventing and responding to violence against children?

	Physical	Sexual	Psychological	Neglect
Family, Home & Workplace	✓	✓	✓	✓
Schools & Institutions	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neighbourhood, Community & Law Enforcement	✓	✓	✓	✓

(Table provided by the UN as part of the question in questionnaire)

Answer

- 42.1 The National Family Violence Networking System, as mentioned in Paragraph **28.1**, was established in 1996 and is funded by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports.

42.2 Under the networking system, regular inter-agency training programmes on child abuse cases are conducted by the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, the Police and Ministry of Health for their staff to enhance their skills and knowledge in the management of such cases. The government also fully funds some of the training programmes for social workers from government and voluntary sectors.

43. Does your Government monitor the impact of these policies and programmes directed towards violence against children?

Answer

43.1 The Singapore Government has in place a programme evaluation system that is used to evaluate the attainment of desired outcomes and service targets of programmes. More information is available at http://www.ncss.gov.sg/ncss/social_services/pes.html.

43.2 Ministry of Community Development and Sports is currently carrying out an evaluation study of the efficacy of Mandatory Counselling Programmes on the behaviour of individuals who undergone the court system for family violence.

44. Does your Government participate in any internationally coordinated activities concerning violence against children?

Answer

44.1 The Singapore Government regularly attends regional & international activities relating to children. The conferences of the International Society of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect are a good example of international events that is regularly attended by the Singapore Government. In fact Singapore Children's Society, a Non-Government Organisation, with the support of the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, is hosting the 6th Asian regional conference of the International Society of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect on 16-18 November 2005.

45. Over the past five years, has there been any victimization, epidemiological or other population-based surveys of any forms of violence against children in your country?

Answer

45.1 The Family Court has conducted a study that examined the profile of families where there is family violence. Some of the variables examined include the type of violence involved, the gender and ethnic profiles of the families, duration of marriage and age of children in the family.

45.2 The Child Guidance Clinic in Institute of Mental Health also conducted on study on the profile of children who are reported to have emotional abuse. Aspects studied included the profile of the families affected and history of the abuse.

46. Have there been any small-scale or representative interview studies with parents and children on violent victimisation of children?

Answer

46.1 A study on the effects of exposure to family violence on the adolescents is currently being carried out by the National University of Singapore. Among other things, the study will attempt to look how much violence teenagers in Singapore are exposed to, how they are affected and its relationship to juvenile delinquency.

47. Over the past five years, has your Government conducted or commissioned any scientific research projects on the problem of violence against children?

Answer

47.1 Two studies were conducted by MCDS in the recent years on the issue of violence against children. In one paper, titled “Patterns of Reported Child Physical and Sexual Abuse in Singapore”, the pattern of physical and sexual abuse of children in Singapore was examined. The other examined the profile of abuse among residents in a girls’ home.

47.2 The Singapore Children’s Society also did a series of monographs on the Public and Professional perceptions of various child abuse in Singapore. They include “Public Perceptions of Child Abuse and Neglect in Singapore”, “Professional & Public Perceptions of Child Abuse and Neglect in Singapore: An Overview”, “Professional & Public Perceptions of Physical Child Abuse and Neglect in Singapore”, “Emotional Maltreatment of Children in Singapore: Professional and Public Perceptions” and “Child Sexual Abuse in Singapore: Professional and Public Perceptions”.

48. Have studies or surveys been undertaken into the impact of legal measures to address violence against children?

Answer

48.1 There has no recent studies conducted to assess the impact of legal measures to address violence.

49. Does your Government have a system for formal inquiries into all child deaths in which it is known or suspected that violence may have played any part?

Answer

49.1 The police will investigate all cases of death, including child deaths when foul play is suspected or detected from the onset. A Coroner's Inquiry is conducted for all cases of unnatural deaths, including child deaths.

50. Are regular (e.g. annual) reports published describing the statistical profile of the known or suspected violent deaths investigated by the system?

If YES, what proportion of all homicide deaths are under the age 18?

.....%

Answer

50.1 Please note that under Singapore's laws (Children and Young Persons Act), children are defined as those under the age of 16.

Statistics for Murder (Sec 302 Penal Code Cap 224) is as follows:

Year	No. of victims aged below 16 (Percentage of total victims)	Total no. of victims - all ages
2000	2 (4.9%)	41
2001	1 (3.1%)	32
2002	4 (12.9%)	31
2003	1 (3.7%)	27

51. If reports on the national profile of known and suspected violent deaths are published by your Government, indicate how the data is broken down for the purpose of reporting (check all that apply):

Sex	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Manner of death (homicide, suicide, undetermined)	
External causes of death (firearm, strangulation, etc.)	
Geographical location of incident (address)	
Scene of occurrence (home, school, etc.)	
Time and date of incident	

Victim-perpetrator relationship	
Other:	

(Table provided by the UN as part of the question in questionnaire)

Answer

51.1 The Singapore Government does not publish such reports.

52. Provide the total number of reported cases of violence against children in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Answer

52.1 There were 145 cases of reported violence against children in 2000, 195 cases in 2001, 193 in 2002 and 205 in 2003.

53. Provide the total number of convictions and reported cases for the various categories of crimes of violence recorded against children in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003.

Answer

53.1 The number cases of alleged child abuse was 145 in 2000, out of which, 50 cases were cases with evidence of abuse, as provided in Singapore's initial report to the UN committee on CRC.

Answer

Q54. Over the last five years has your Government conducted or commissioned any campaigns for raising awareness of and preventing violence against children?

Answer

54.1 A key pillar in the management of family violence framework in Singapore is the prevention of family violence. MCDS together with its partners organise public education programmes on family violence which covers child abuse, spousal violence and elder abuse. The desired outcomes include the reduction in the incidence of family violence cases in Singapore as well as greater awareness among the public on how and where to seek help.

54.2 To raise awareness about preventing violence, the Ministry has placed information on the different types of abuse and advice on where to get help on-line in the Family Town website (<http://www.familytown.gov.sg>). There are also games, quizzes and stories to help children understand family violence and child abuse.

54.3 MCDS provides funding to social service agencies that are keen to carry out public education projects. The co-funding scheme has supported social service agencies in

- organizing forums and programmes to educate their community. Last year, the Ministry partnered a Family Service Centre and co-funded a skit for primary school children on family violence and child abuse called "Love Me, Stop Hurting Me". The skit was seen by 10,400 children below 12 years old. The evaluation report showed that 83% had learnt more about family violence/child abuse from the skit. The skit also received positive feedback from the school principals and teachers who found the performance and talk interactive and beneficial for the children. For children who indicated that they had witnessed or experienced family violence, the Family Service Centre ran groupwork aimed at building resilience and providing an avenue for them to discuss their concerns. The skit will continue to run this year to reach another targeted 10,000 students.
- 54.4 To raise awareness amongst young people on relationship violence and the avenues available to talk about their concerns, the Ministry commissioned a skit which ran in secondary schools, vocational institutes and junior colleges from February 2003 to March 2004. The skit depicts a young couple whose relationship becomes increasingly violent. It questions if the violent behaviour is acceptable and if it will end. The play seeks to educate young people on the signs of violent relationships and encourage discussion about safe and healthy relationships. The skit had reached out to about 27,500 youths.
- 54.5 Feedback from the students showed that more than 85% of them indicated an increased knowledge about family violence and where they can seek help. 25% indicated having personal knowledge of family and relatives who had experienced family violence while, between 6% - 20%, had personally experienced dating violence. This indicates to us a need to reach out to the younger audience as early as possible. Violent dating relationships can be a prelude to spousal violence if not addressed at a preventive level.
- 54.6 The Ministry placed advertisements on child sexual abuse and family violence in a popular children's magazine over the last quarter of 2003. The advertisements were also carried in a special National Day magazine which was given out to 65,000 Primary 5 pupils attending the National Day Parade preview.
- 54.7 The Ministry also worked with a sponsor to fund Project SHINE, an early intervention programme for children who are at risk of being abused. Project SHINE is targeted at children in their upper primary who display symptomatic behaviour such as high absenteeism, not making the grade in school, have limited parental guidance or exhibit at-risk behaviour such as using violence to resolve conflicts and defiance towards authority. It is a 6-month programme comprising groupwork (skills development), community service, parenting groupwork, sports and recreation, counselling, befriending and financial assistance.
- 54.8 The Police are also active in raising awareness and preventing violence against children. The following are two Community Safety and Security Programmes which were recently organized.

- 54.9 The first event was a collaboration with six secondary schools where 100 students participated in presentations and exhibitions from the Police, Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence, Family Court and Samaritans of Singapore. Through this event, the students became more aware of what is family violence and where are the avenues for them to seek help should they encounter such problem.
- 54.10 The second event aimed at raising awareness of crime prevention amongst children. About 285 students from 20 primary schools and representatives from various social service agencies attended the event. Through exhibitions, games and a skit, the students learnt how to protecting themselves from crime and physical, sexual or emotional abuses.

Q55.) How were the campaign messages and information disseminated (check all that apply)?

Print Media	✓
Radio	✓
Television	✓
Theatre	✓
Schools	✓
Others	✓

(Table provided by the UN as part of the question in questionnaire)

56. Over the last five years, has your Government provided, commissioned or sponsored training programmes in the area of violence against children?

Answer

- 56.1 Since 1997, MCDS has organised training on the management of family violence for frontline workers on three levels—the basic, intermediate and specialised. Basic training covers an overview of the legislative framework on family violence, the protocol on the management of family violence cases by various agencies, as well as skills and techniques for providing help in such cases. At the intermediate level, counselling skills to engage mandated clients and couples are taught. The specialised level of training includes learning skills to counsel clients with alcohol addictions, working with mandated clients in groups and working with child witnesses of violence.
- 56.2 In addition, inter-agency joint training between the Police and social service agencies has been introduced to strengthen the effectiveness of the family violence network system. In September 2002, through a Group Work Internship Programme, Voluntary Welfare Organisations were trained in group work therapy for perpetrators, adult and child victims of family violence. The interns observed

their trainers and serve as co-facilitators for group therapy sessions as part of the on-the-job training.

	Prevention	Protection	Redress	Rehabilitation	Penalties
Medical Professionals (including paediatricians, nurses, psychiatrists and dentists)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public health practitioners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social workers and Psychologists	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teachers and other educators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Court officials (including judges)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Police	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prison officers			✓	✓	✓
Juvenile offenders personnel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institution personnel					
Parents/guardians					
Other (please specify) – Foster Parents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(Table provided by the UN as part of the question in questionnaire)

56.3 The Ministry regularly conducts awareness programmes and training for medical professionals, social workers, psychologists, educators, court officials, police, foster parents and institution personnel. In the last year, experts have trained the above officers on a wide variety of topics. They include:

- Developmental Needs and Milestones of Infants and Children
- Management of Child Abuse in Singapore
- Interagency Training on Child Protection
- Interagency Training on Child Sexual Abuse
- Child Protection Assessment
- Facilitating Children to be Effective Witnesses
- Disability and Child Protection
- Children's Cases – Decision Making
- Child Witnesses of Violence
- Safety in the Home
- Encouraging Positive Self-Esteem and Social Competence
- Helping Children Cope with Stress
- Preventing and Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Communicating with Children