



**Convention on the
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Singapore

FOREWORD

Singapore has accomplished significant milestones in recent years. In 2015, the nation came together to celebrate 50 years of independence. The same year also marked the 20th anniversary of Singapore's accession to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Singapore remains committed to respecting and protecting the rights of our children, and we are pleased to report our efforts since 2009.

Singapore has strengthened legislation, systems and policies to improve protection for our children. We amended the Children and Young Persons Act to enhance the welfare and care of children, and the Women's Charter and the Administration of Muslim Law Act to better support children from divorced families. In 2014, Singapore also established the Family Justice Courts, which takes the best interests of the child into account in familial disputes.

We have increased our support for families with young children. We enhanced the Child Development Co-Savings Act in 2016 to provide more financial support for child-raising and improve leave schemes to enable working parents to manage both work and family responsibilities. We also provided assurance to parents with young children on the accessibility, affordability and quality of early childhood services. This reflects the commitment of the Singapore Government to give every child a good start in life, regardless of background. Over the next five years, we will build on the good progress made, and invest even more to significantly expand the provision of affordable and quality early childhood services, and transform the early childhood profession. We will also make a special effort for children from low income and vulnerable families, so that they have access to basic health, learning, and developmental opportunities in the critical early years. Furthermore, in our desire for Singapore to be a more inclusive society, Singapore will extend compulsory education to children with moderate to severe special education needs from 2019.

Every child is precious and deserves to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment. Singapore recognises that protecting and promoting the rights of the child is an ongoing effort. Our commitment is to continue to empower our children to achieve their full potential.

Tan Chuan-Jin
Minister for Social and Family Development

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
AMLA	Administration of Muslim Law Act
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPC	Beyond Parental Control
CANS	Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths
CCE	Character and Citizenship Education
CDA	Child Development Account
CE	Compulsory Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CMA	Committee for Monitoring Attrition
CNB	Central Narcotics Bureau
CPF	Central Provident Fund
CPS	Child Protective Service
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CYGO	Central Youth Guidance Office
CYPA	Children and Young Persons Act
CYPs	Children and Young Persons
DSSA	Divorce Support Specialist Agency
ECDA	Early Childhood Development Agency
ESWP	Enhanced Streetwise Programme
FSC	Family Service Centre
FJC	Family Justice Courts
GP	Guidance Programme
HDB	Housing Development Board
HPB	Health Promotion Board
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IL	Information Literacy
IMC-CRC	Inter-Ministry Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child
ITE	Institute of Technical Education
IRCCs	Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles
IWCP	Inter-Ministry Workgroup on Child Protection
JRC	Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre
KiFAS	Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme
MCCY	Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
MSF	Ministry of Social and Family Development
NAC	National Arts Council
NCSS	National Council of Social Service
NHB	National Heritage Board
NLB	National Library Board
NYC	National Youth Council
NYGR	National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation
OPSC	Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
OWD	Office for Women's Development
PE	Physical Education
PHTA	Prevention of Human Trafficking Act

PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examinations
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SCs	Singapore Citizens
SCS	Singapore Children's Society
SDM	Structured Decision Making
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SPARK	Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework
SPED	Special Education (Schools)
SPF	Singapore Police Force
SSF	Safe and Strong Families (Pilot)
SSI	Social Service Institute
SSOs	Social Service Office
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TIP	Trafficking In Persons
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VWOs	Voluntary Welfare Organisation
WC	Women's Charter

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Government of Singapore (the Government) presents Singapore's Fourth and Fifth Periodic Report (the Report) on Singapore's progress from 2009 to 2016¹ in relation to the 2011 Concluding Observations, and implementation of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). The Government sought feedback from the public through the Government's online consultation portal REACH². Key stakeholder engagements were conducted with voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and other agencies (see [Annex A](#)).
2. The Report follows the Committee's treaty-specific guidelines³, and should be read with Singapore's Initial Report on the OPAC⁴, the Initial Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)⁵, and Singapore's National Report submitted to the Human Rights Council at the Twenty-fourth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in January 2016⁶. References are made to Singapore's previous periodic reports (reports) to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, where relevant.
3. This Report has been published on MSF's website. Hardcopies will be distributed to relevant stakeholders.

Singapore's approach to child rights

4. ***The Government has made significant progress in improving the rights of children, taking reference from the articles of the CRC and the 2011 Concluding Observations.***
5. Since the last report, Singapore has enhanced its legislation, systems and policies to better protect our children. The Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) was amended to enhance the protection and rehabilitation of children while other legislative enhancements were made to better enshrine the CRC's guiding principle that the welfare and best interest of the child is the first and paramount concern. In 2014, Singapore established the Family Justice Courts to ensure that the best interests of the child is taken into account in familial disputes.
6. The Government champions and continues to make strides in building an inclusive society where children with disabilities can realise their potential, as Singapore begins the implementation of its third Enabling Masterplan for 2017 to 2021. To make Singapore a more inclusive society, we will be extending compulsory education to children with moderate to severe special education needs from 2019.
7. In addition, we have increased our support for the wider child population. We have enhanced the accessibility, affordability and quality of early childhood services, to give every child a good start in life and support families with young children. The number of infant and childcare places has increased by close to 50% since 2012 to meet parents' needs. We also enhanced the subsidies for child care and kindergarten services, and introduced a range of initiatives to attract, develop and retain good teachers to uplift the quality of early childhood services. The Child Development Co-Savings Act was amended in 2016 to provide more financial benefits for

¹ Legislation introduced or amended in 2017 are also included.

² <https://www.reach.gov.sg>

³ CRC/C/58/Rev.3

⁴ CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/1

⁵ CRPD/C/SGP/1

⁶ A/HRC/WG.6/24/SGP/1

children and improve leave schemes to enable working parents to better manage work and family responsibilities.

8. On the international front, Singapore has become party to and signed several human rights agreements affecting children (see paragraphs 105, 196 and 223 of this report).
9. The effect of these developments are reflected in the improved outcomes for children in Singapore. The Yearbook of Statistics Singapore 2017⁷ and Annex C contain the relevant statistics.
10. Singapore's progress from the Third World to First ensured broad-based social uplift for its citizens in one generation. Refer to Singapore's National Report submitted to the Human Rights Council for our Second UPR in January 2016. ***Despite our achievements, we do not take this development trajectory for granted and recognise we can still improve in many areas while bearing in mind our fundamental political, economic and geostrategic constraints remain unchanged.***
 - a. ***Land scarcity.*** With a small land area of 719.7 km² (as at end 2016) and scarce natural resources, Singapore is one of the world's most densely populated island city-states with 5.6 million people, comprising 3.4 million citizens, 0.5 million foreign citizens with Permanent Resident status, and another 1.7 million foreign citizens living, studying or working in the country as at end June 2016.
 - b. ***Diverse ethnic and religious population profile.*** The Pew Research Centre described Singapore as the most religiously diverse country in the world in 2014. Our resident population (i.e. citizens and foreign citizens with Permanent Resident status), largely descendants of immigrants, is ethnically diverse, comprising 74.3% Chinese, 13.4% Malays, 9.1% Indians and 3.2% from other ethnicities as at end June 2016. We are also multi-religious, with a resident population aged 15 years and over that is 33.2% Buddhist, 14.0% Muslim, 18.8% Christian, 10.0% Taoist, 5.0% Hindu and the remainder from numerous other faiths or without any religious affiliation in 2015. ***For Singapore, our priority is to scrupulously manage our racial and religious differences, while steadily forging a nation out of immigrants. The freedom to express individual opinions would need to be balanced with racial and religious harmony in society.***
11. ***Singapore adopts a practical approach to the realization of human rights.*** Human rights are realised within specific cultural, social, economic and historical context. In every country, accommodation must be reached among the competing rights of the individuals who make up the nation and the interests of society as a whole. Singapore firmly applies the rule of law to ensure stability, equality and social justice, which are the necessary conditions for respecting the fundamental human rights enshrined in our Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We focus on delivering good socio-economic outcomes through pragmatic public policies.
12. We believe that families are the basic building block of society and key pillars of support for individuals, especially children. Singapore is committed to being a great place to build families and raise children. The Government provides support to families and children through their significant milestones and life-stages, especially those who need help to stay together and strong. Singapore wants every child to have a good start in life and grow to become caring, resilient and engaged individuals in society. Starting early is key. While the Government continues to play a strong role in strengthening families to raise children, it is mindful that its role does not dilute the responsibility of individuals and the wider community.

⁷ <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications-and-papers/reference/yearbook-of-statistics-singapore>

13. ***The Government is fully committed to the protection and promotion of the human rights of our citizens, including children.*** Singapore enables the fulfilment of these rights effectively bearing in mind Singapore's specific national circumstances and aspirations.

II. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

A. Declarations and Reservations

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

14. The Government appreciates and has carefully considered the Committee's comments relating to Singapore's declarations and reservations. We are however not ready to withdraw any of the declarations or reservations. The declarations reflect how Singapore interprets the relevant provisions operating in Singapore's context. The reservations explain how the relevant provisions are implemented in accordance with Singapore's national laws. We recognise that our citizens' demands evolve over time and we constantly review our goals, policies and laws to meet these demands.

B. Legislation (Article 4)

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

15. The Singapore Constitution enshrines and protects fundamental liberties, including the right to life and liberty, freedom of speech, assembly and association of all Singaporeans. Like in other national constitutions and human right instruments, these provisions are not couched in absolute terms. They may be restricted by law in the interest of security or public order
16. Singapore implements its obligations under the CRC through legislative and other measures such as administrative procedures. ***Since Singapore's last periodic report, there have been several amendments to Singapore's legislation to enhance the rights of children in Singapore.***
17. ***The CYPA was amended in 2011 to improve the protection for children and young persons (CYPs).*** All CYP welfare homes must now be licensed. The terms and conditions imposed under the license ensure high standards of care for children in these homes. Public officers are also empowered to obtain relevant information for earlier detection and intervention. They are able to make enquiries when there is reasonable cause to believe that a CYP has been abused/neglected or is at risk of abuse. This ensures that officers may obtain the necessary information to ascertain if a CYP is in need of care and protection. The identity of the CYP subjected to an investigation or taken into custody is also better safeguarded. The CYPA is actively being reviewed to enhance the care and protection options for CYPs.
18. ***The Women's Charter (WC) has been amended twice to improve support for children from divorcing parents.*** In 2011, we strengthened enforcement of maintenance orders, including child maintenance. Divorcing couples are required to attend mandatory mediation and counselling after filing for divorce, if they have at least one child who is below 21 years old. In 2016, the WC was further amended to require divorcing couples who have children below 14 years to complete a parenting programme before filing for divorce. The Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) was also amended in 2017 to require divorcing couples to attend mandatory counselling before filing for divorce. If they have at least one child who is below 21

years old, they are also required to complete a post-divorce parenting plan. The objective is to resolve care arrangements early and reduce acrimonious proceedings. Other amendments to AMLA incorporated child-centric proposals, such as allowing the Syariah Court to refer divorcing couples for counselling or to participate in a family support programme at any stage of the divorce proceeding. ***We also enacted the Family Justice Act to set up the Family Justice Courts (FJC)*** to resolve family disputes more effectively and protect the best interests of affected children.

19. ***New legislation has been introduced to safeguard all persons (including children) from harassment and to prevent trafficking in persons.*** The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) came into force in November 2014 to enhance protection against harassment, including sexual harassment and school or cyberspace bullying. The Act criminalises harassment, and provides a range of self-help and civil remedies to victims. The Government decided that an omnibus legislation was necessary to deal with harassment as such behaviour can severely disrupt the lives of many people, especially children. In 2015, the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) was enacted to criminalise the trafficking of persons, including children. PHTA also provides measures to protect the welfare of trafficked victims and encourages the reporting of trafficking or suspected trafficking.
20. ***We have progressively enhanced other legislation to raise the standards of care and protection for children and provide better support for families having children.*** The AMLA was amended in 2009 to raise the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18 years old. The Employment Act was amended in 2013 to extend maternity protection to the full duration of pregnancy, so that employers are required to pay maternity leave benefits to employees who are dismissed without sufficient cause, or retrenched at any stage of her pregnancy. The Child Development Co-Savings Act was amended in 2016 to enhance leave schemes and the Baby Bonus Scheme under the Marriage and Parenthood Package. The Early Childhood Development Centres Act was introduced in 2017 to bring child care centres and kindergartens under the same regulatory framework to ensure more consistent and higher standards across the pre-school sector.

C. Coordination and National Plan of Action **[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.11, 13]**

21. Singapore notes the Committee's comments in paragraphs 11 and 13. ***While Singapore agrees with the Committee that national policies for our children should be implemented and monitored effectively, we adopt a different approach for the implementation and monitoring of our national policies relating to children.***
22. The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) is the lead agency in-charge of Singapore's policies relating to children. It maintains oversight over child rights issues. For national policies relating to children which cut across other agencies' areas of responsibility, inter-agency committees (or other effective means of collaboration) are formed to ensure the different policy aspects cater to the child's best interests. Within such collaborations, measurable and time-bound targets are set and each agency is required to report on the progress of the implementation of the policies within its area of responsibility. We also collaborate with civil society to advance children's rights. Our approach ensures all agencies whose work affects children are actively involved and are held accountable. It has worked well and been proven effective for the purposes of implementing and monitoring Singapore's policies relating to children, including the implementation of Singapore's obligations under the CRC.

D. Independent Monitoring (Article 4)

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

23. We note the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 15. While Singapore does not currently have a national institution of the kind envisaged by the Paris Principles, we have, as highlighted in the previous reports, various independent monitoring mechanisms already in place. *Singapore welcomes independent feedback to improve support for our children.* We hold consultations with both private and people sector representatives to shape policies and programmes for children. VWOs such as the Singapore Children's Society (SCS) play an independent role in monitoring and critiquing the work of government agencies on children welfare. SCS also conducts independent research on the state of children in Singapore. There are also various means under our law to prevent and address the abuse of children and their rights.

E. Data Collection (Article 4)

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

24. *Singapore collects and uses data to monitor the well-being of children and review existing policies.* Data specific to children and youth⁸ are collected. Examples include the National Youth Survey which captures youth demographic and cultural indicators. Findings from this survey, which is conducted periodically, offer insight into the emergent youth trends and the support youth require for societal engagement and individual development. The profile of youth surveyed was between 15 to 34 years old.
25. We take note of the Committee's comments in paragraphs 16 and 17. *Singapore has a system in place to collect and analyse data on child abuse.* Table 17 of Annex C provides disaggregated data on the number of child abuse cases investigated. Data on child victims of trafficking are collected, treated sensitively, and monitored closely by government agencies. Our current mechanisms to collect, and analyse the relevant data on child victims are sufficient for the authorities to study and analyse the relevant trends. We therefore do not currently need a national central database.

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

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

26. *Singapore's progress on the advancement of children rights is published on MSF's website.* To disseminate information and create awareness on the CRC, we work with various partners, including pre-schools, schools and community agencies, to extend the distribution channels for CRC public education resources. As a result, these resources are now disseminated to more families through religious and community events. In 2015, these partners also collaborated to organise events such as the CRC Logo Design Competition and a Creative Arts Competition to celebrate Singapore's 20th anniversary of accession to the CRC. See Annex B for a more complete list of the efforts to publicise the CRC's principles and provisions.

G. Training (Article 3(3))

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

27. *Singapore has enhanced the training for professionals who work with children.* Social service professionals have access to specialised training to work better with children. The training is conducted by the Social Service Institute and includes information on the CRC and its

⁸ Youth refer to persons between ages 15 to 35 years old.

principles. Teachers are also trained to look out for and respond to students with special care and protection needs. Additionally, police officers and professionals involved in criminal investigations are trained to be child-sensitive when investigating cases involving children.

H. Cooperation with civil society (Article 4)

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

28. *Singapore recognises the importance of working with the private and people sector to improve support for our children.* To this end, we collaborate with private organisations such as Families for Life⁹, universities, and think-tanks like the Institute of Policy Studies when formulating programmes. We also consult relevant stakeholders, including VWOs in policy formulation and legislative reviews. Bills are typically released for public consultation to allow civil society to provide feedback

I. International cooperation (Article 4)

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

Assistance to other countries

29. Singapore has been providing technical assistance through the Singapore Cooperation Programme to help developing countries attain their development goals including the Millennium Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To date, Singapore has trained over 115,000 government officials from more than 170 countries. Since 1999, we have partnered UNICEF to conduct courses in early childhood education for participants from 23 countries. We have also conducted other related training programmes such as on pre and post natal healthcare for mothers and children. Singapore also makes annual financial contributions to the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

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

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

J. Resource allocation (Article 4)

31. *The Government continues to dedicate resources to children-related development.* In 2016, government expenditure on social development was S\$34 billion (US\$ 25 billion)¹⁰. This includes expenditure on education, health, community development, youth and sports, information, communications and the arts, amongst others.

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

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

32. *All corporations operating in Singapore are subject to Singapore law, including employment law.* Singapore's employment legislation provides for the protection of the child in respect of

⁹ The National Family Council first formed in 2006 to promote resilient families was renamed "Families for Life" in 2014.

¹⁰ See Annex C, Tables 4 and 5 for the breakdown of social expenditure. Conversion rates here and henceforth in the Report were calculated on 7 August 2017, using www.xe.com

the maximum number of working hours, time of work and types of work. A contravention of these conditions constitutes an offence which is punishable under the law. Any person may report such breaches to the authorities, which will investigate accordingly.

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

III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

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

34. Refer to our previous reports on the definition of “child” and “young person” under Singapore law. We are reviewing the CYPA and assessing, amongst other things, the timing of including young persons from 16 to 18 years old who may require care or protection. ***In the meantime, there are already robust programmes and services in place to support such children even without the legislation.*** Some examples include access to early intervention programmes to address at-risk behaviours (e.g. conduct issues, victim or perpetrator of bullying) under the Youth-at-Risk Engagement Framework. Singapore’s Penal Code also protects all minors under 18 from commercial sex activities and from being groomed for sexual purposes. Furthermore, 16 to 18 year old offenders have access to pre-court diversionary programmes so that they avoid the trauma of court proceedings and the stigma of a criminal record. The Probation of Offenders Act further provides for first time offenders below the age of 21 years to be placed on probation, where a successful completion allows the youth to not have a conviction record.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

A. Non-discrimination (Article 2)

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.30(a)-(e)]

35. As explained in previous reports, ***Article 12 of the Constitution guarantees all Singapore citizens, including children, the right to equality, non-discrimination and equal protection under the law.*** The equal rights cover gender, religion, ethnicity and ability. In practice, even when resources are prioritised to first meet the needs of Singapore citizens, we strive to treat all children, including non-citizens, equally.
36. ***Racial and religious harmony is important to Singapore. Singapore considers it a national priority to combat discrimination on the grounds of race or religion.*** We have emphasised the importance of racial and religious harmony in Singapore and outlined the strong legal framework to safeguard them in our reports for the UPR and previous reports to the Committee. Young children are taught in schools to respect and celebrate the cultural and religious practices of the different ethnic groups. Children from different racial and religious groups learn and play together, and celebrate their different cultural and religious roots in schools. Students are taught the origins of Singapore's major religions, the significance of religious practices, and ways to relate to people of different races and religions. This helps to guard against the development of harmful prejudices and stereotypes.
37. ***Singapore laws protect women and girls from discrimination.*** Singapore is ranked 11th out of 159 countries surveyed in the United Nations Gender Inequality Index 2015¹¹. ***Multiple government agencies work together to monitor, prevent and, where appropriate, address discrimination against women and girls. The relevant ministries coordinate strategies and collect data to track the development of women in the area of education, health, labour force participation, decision making positions, and protection against violence, amongst other social indicators.*** We refer to our previous reports and Singapore’s reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in regard to the measures to ensure that there is no discrimination against women and girls.

¹¹ UNDP, 2015. Human Development Report 2015 (p. 224).

38. ***Singapore nurtures an inclusive and enabling society for every child, including those with disabilities, to grow up in.*** By working closely with stakeholders to organise public awareness campaigns and movements (see [Annex B](#)), we celebrate the abilities of persons with disabilities and cultivate inclusive mind-sets. We ensure that feedback channels are available for persons with disabilities to challenge acts of discrimination. We have also put in place amenities conducive for children with different abilities to interact and learn together, including five inclusive playgrounds sponsored by corporate and individual donors.

B. Best interests (Article 3)
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.32]

39. ***Singapore continuously enhances our practices and legislation in line with our belief that the child's best interests are paramount.***
40. ***During police investigations, we ensure child-sensitive practices are applied.*** Recognising the needs of child abuse victims, we deploy officers trained in child-sensitive interviewing techniques and reduce the number of interviews required. The use of video-recording as evidence for subsequent Court proceedings is being considered under the ongoing CYPA review.
41. ***The Juvenile Court was renamed to Youth Court to avoid negative labelling of children involved in proceedings in this Court.*** To be sensitive to child protection cases in the Youth Court, we allow affidavits during hearings to avoid subjecting a child to cross-examination. The court can withhold information from persons if disclosure is assessed to be detrimental to the child. For examples of legislative enhancements to promote the child's best interests, refer to paragraphs 16-20.

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

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

D. Respect for the views of the child (Article 12)
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para. 34(a), (b), (c)]

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

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

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

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

45. In the FJC, for appropriate cases, trained Judges and court mental health professionals interview children for their views and concerns in determining custody and access in divorce cases, so that Judges are better informed. Starting in 2014, lawyers with experience in family law work involving child issues ('child representatives') are appointed in appropriate cases to advocate for the child's interests during these proceedings. The 2017 amendments to the AMLA also allow the Syariah Court to appoint, in appropriate cases, a child representative in any proceedings involving a child or the custody and welfare of the child. During care and permanency planning for children under state care, social service agencies are likewise guided to focus on the child's views through a practice framework known as Partnering for Safety.
46. ***We proactively involve children to share views on issues that affect them and shape their future.*** Through online consultation portals, forum discussions and panel discussions in post-secondary schools, students exchange ideas with political leaders and policy-makers on policy issues. In 2016, the SGfuture dialogue sessions invited youth to share their views directly with government and community groups on diverse issues that affected them.¹² This series was complemented by the Young ChangeMakers scheme where young people congregate, connect and collaborate with like-minded individuals to make a difference in the community (e.g. organising community projects, starting ground-up initiatives).
47. ***At the regional and international level, our children are given opportunities to express views and participate in decision-making forums.*** Singapore hosted the second ASEAN Children's Forum in June 2012, and participated in the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum in 2016. In June 2016, children representatives from Singapore participated in the fourth ASEAN Children's Forum in Hanoi, Vietnam.

¹² SGfuture is a platform to discuss youth's hopes and dreams for the next chapter of Singapore's story.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

A. Name and nationality (Article 7)

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

48. Singapore has explained how a child acquires Singapore citizenship under its laws in its previous reports. Eligibility for Singapore citizenship is set out in Singapore's Constitution, which states that citizenship may be acquired by birth, by descent, by registration or by naturalisation. Only a child of a Singapore citizen can be a citizen by birth or descent.
49. We note the Committee's comments in regard to stateless children. *Singapore laws do not provide for the deprivation of citizenship of any child who is a Singapore citizen by birth or descent. Like any other person, stateless children may apply for Singapore citizenship in accordance with the law.* In regard to children born to Singaporean mothers before May 2004, they may apply for Singapore citizenship by registration under Singapore laws.

B. Preservation of identity (Article 8)

50. Please refer to Singapore's Initial Report¹³.

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

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

51. *The Government supports a youth's right to express his/her views, associate with others and assemble peacefully. We recognise that these rights nurture confident and resilient youth who can have a positive impact on society.* These rights are protected under our Constitution. Singapore's declaration on Article 13 remains so that the freedom of speech is balanced with the need to respect the rights and reputations of others, to protect national security and friendly relations with other countries, and ensure public order or morality.
52. Our previous reports described how these freedoms are exercised in practice in accordance with the law. In addition, the National Youth Council (NYC) organises programmes, forums and dialogues, for youth to network and participate in the development of the youth sector. These platforms encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas and form communities of practice. The National Youth Fund champions ground-up youth initiatives to support volunteerism, capacity building, and development of community partnerships. Youth.SG, an online content provider by youths for youths continues to serve as a space for young Singaporeans to share issues that matter to them. NYC provides various initiatives such as forums and dialogues which expose youth to diverse causes and issues, foster understanding on Singapore's challenges and inculcate positive values. These provide appropriate platforms for youth to express their views in a responsible manner.

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

53. We refer to our previous reports. *Singapore continues to enhance its efforts to foster an environment conducive for racial and religious harmony.* All students learn Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) and Social Studies, which emphasise respect, empathy and

¹³ See CRC/C/51/Add.8:p.41.para175-177

responsibility in fostering racial and religious harmony in multicultural Singapore. Students are equipped with knowledge of beliefs, festivals and practices of different religions, and skills to understand issues from different perspectives.

E. Protection of privacy (Article 16)

54. ***Protecting the privacy of children under investigation.*** The CYPA was amended in 2011 to prohibit the broadcast or publication of information that identifies a CYP who is being investigated, or taken into custody, or who is subject of an order by a court under the CYPA.
55. ***Protecting individuals from harassment.*** The POHA was introduced in 2014 to strengthen protection against harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying in schools and in cyberspace, and send a clear signal that such acts will not be tolerated.
56. ***Protecting individuals from defamation and slander.*** The Defamation Act provides the framework for an action to be taken against libel or slander while Sections 499 to 502 of the Penal Code provide for the criminal offences of defamation.

F. Access to appropriate information (Article 17)

57. ***Singapore ensures children have access to quality broadcasts and are protected from injurious material.*** The Media Development Authority ensures that materials available are appropriate for children. There are also guidelines to ensure the protection of children. These include measures such as movie and video game game classifications, pin locks for television subscriptions and Internet filtering services (see [Annex B](#)).
58. With one of the world's highest wireless broadband penetration rates at 191.7% in 2016, ***Singapore encourages youth to become discerning consumers to evaluate internet and media content effectively and use, create and share content safely and responsibly.*** Information Literacy (IL) concepts are therefore embedded in the school curriculum. As of 2016, over 12,000 teachers have been trained to impart IL skills to students.
59. ***Singapore encourages Singaporeans to adopt good IL practices through funding and coordination efforts.*** Singapore established the Inter-Ministry Cyber Wellness Steering Committee in 2009 to coordinate Government efforts in funding and promoting cyber wellness programmes for youth. The Media Literacy Council, formed in 2012, works in partnership with the Government, industry and community to spearhead public education programmes and initiatives relating to media literacy and cyber wellness. The National Library Board (NLB) also drives the National Information Literacy Programme which launched a nationwide campaign¹⁴ and a resource portal¹⁵ in 2013 to encourage good IL practices.
60. ***To encourage reading from a young age,*** the NLB provides an array of library services for children, including the Early Literacy Library and two mini-Mobile Library buses¹⁶ (see [Annex B](#)).

¹⁴ The campaign is known as the S.U.R.E (Source, Understand, Research and Evaluate) campaign. S.U.R.E. workshops are conducted at public libraries (see <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/publicworkshops>).

¹⁵ See <http://www.nlb.gov.sg/sure/>

¹⁶ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.43,para.181

VI. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

A. Abuse and neglect (Article 19)

61. As previously illustrated in our previous reports to the Committee, Singapore believes that no child should be abused. *We have been enhancing our protection measures to better support child victims.*
62. *Enhanced measures for victims to seek early help.* In addition to Family Group Conferences¹⁷, psychological programmes have been introduced to equip children with self-protection strategies, address trauma and assist recovery (see [Annex B](#) for recent programmes). Children in distress can call community helplines such as Tinkle Friend Helpline¹⁸ run by the Singapore Children’s Society and the SOS¹⁹ 24-hour hotline. On the ground, the National Family Violence Networking System links government agencies, police, hospitals and VWOs to provide multiple touch points for those affected by violence to be assisted promptly.
63. *Structured decision-making to improve early detection and intervention.* In 2010, Singapore undertook a review of the Child Protection System and MSF’s Child Protective Service (CPS). The review was completed in 2011. The recommendation led to a revamp and formation of the Inter-Ministry Workgroup on Child Protection²⁰ in 2012, focusing on strategic planning for the child protection landscape and a higher level of stakeholder representation. Arising from one of the recommendations, the Structured Decision Making (SDM) system²¹ was adopted as a national framework for child protection in 2015. It helps the CPS and its community partners (e.g. hospitals and Family Service Centres (FSCs)) better detect and manage child abuse early. The tools include the Sector Specific Screening Guide (SSSG) – a first-of-its-kind effort for any child welfare system globally and the Child Abuse Reporting Guide (CARG). The SSSG helps frontline professionals interacting with children in schools and hospitals to know when to escalate cases for specialised intervention, while the CARG assists sector partners to identify child protection concerns and decide whether to report the case to CPS or take an alternative course of action.
64. *Community-based specialist services as part of earlier intervention.* Enhanced referral processes have enabled children at low or moderate risk to be helped by community-based agencies, such as the three Child Protection Specialist Centres, three Family Violence Specialist Centres and FSCs. These agencies provide families with counselling and ongoing community support to enhance parenting capabilities. Children with high-risks and needs are cared for through statutory intervention. As far as possible, Singapore’s policy is for children to remain with their families and receive support from the community.

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

65. *Singapore has intensified public education on signs of abuse and strengthened channels of help for victims.* Since 2008, we have provided funding to community partners to develop family violence public education initiatives. In 2015, we provided training to community partners on family violence prevention via “The A.C.T. Community Ambassador Programme”.

¹⁷ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.57,para.256-257

¹⁸ Tinkle Friend Helpline (for child abuse): 1800-274-4788

¹⁹ SOS (Samaritans of Singapore): 1800-221-4444

²⁰ IWCP was previously named Inter-Ministry Working Group on the Management of Child Abuse.

²¹ The SDM System is a research and evidence-based decision support system, developed by the Children’s Research Centre, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, USA.

We also encouraged the community and bystanders to raise awareness of and report abuse cases through public education campaigns like the “Tell Someone” initiative in 2011 and “Break the Silence” campaign in 2016 which used social media to reach out to the digital community.

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

66. As previously reported, Singapore does not have a system of mandatory reporting on child abuse. However, persons are legally required to report a suspected sexual abuse case under the Criminal Procedure Code (Section 424). The CYPA also provides that those who in good faith, alert the police, on children whom they suspect need care and protection, shall not incur civil or criminal liability for notifying authorities. We have studied the experience of other countries with mandatory reporting systems and decided that for Singapore’s purposes, *it is more effective to focus on enhancing the capability of frontline professionals who are best-placed to identify early warning signs and report abuse*. These professionals are those with regular contact with children, such as teachers, social workers and law enforcement staff (see also paragraph 63).

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

67. *The Government raised the legal marriage age for Muslims from 16 to 18 years* under the AMLA in 2009. This better aligns with the legal marriage age for non-Muslims under the Women’s Charter as well as the CRC.

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

68. As stated in our previous reports to the Committee, Singapore is firmly against any violence committed against children. Special protection is provided under Singapore laws for the vulnerable. More special protection measures have been introduced recently. Appropriate Adults (AAs) may be activated to support children during police investigations (see paragraphs 199 and 216). There is also a mandatory requirement under the PHTA for proceedings involving the sexual exploitation of child victims to be in camera (see paragraph 192).

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

69. As stated in our previous reports²² *Singapore does not view corporal punishment as torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Corporal punishment is not a common punishment in Singapore and is only conducted as a last resort with strict regulations, guidelines and procedures*²³.
70. The Child Care Centres Regulations prohibit staff from administering any form of corporal punishment. Teachers are trained to manage the learning and behaviour of pupils and establish a safe, inclusive and supportive classroom environment. *Corporal punishment is used as a last resort for serious misdemeanours in schools*. Misbehaving students are provided with school counselling or interventions, to help them understand the consequences and take responsibility for their actions. Caning only applies to male students and parents are kept informed. Each case is evaluated thoroughly and there are clear procedures to prevent abuse of institutional authority by personnel in meting out corporal punishment. Corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure is carried out by either the Head of the school or a delegated senior member of staff at an

²² For example, see Singapore’s UPR reported in A/HRC/18/11

²¹ For example, all corporal punishments in JRCs are properly recorded and conducted in the presence of another staff member.

appropriate venue. A range of one to three strokes of a light cane may be given only on the palms or buttocks over clothing

71. ***In youth justice settings, corporal punishment for young offenders who commit serious crimes is a tightly-regulated sentencing option.*** Corporal punishment is imposed only in cases of serious institutional offences and after adjudication by the Superintendent. In Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres, caning is used sparingly, only for very serious offences, and after counselling and alternative disciplinary methods used repeatedly to address the offences have failed. The Singapore Boys' Home also ensures that corporal punishment is carried out under highly-controlled conditions²⁴, using lighter equipment by authorised staff, with procedures to safeguard long-term mental and physical well-being of the young offender. The cane used for such situations is a light rattan cane, and is different from the cane used for adult offenders.

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

72. ***Singapore increased structured family life education programmes to promote positive, participatory and non-physical forms of discipline.*** Under FamilyMatters@School, family life educators conduct parenting talks and training in schools. As of June 2016, over 47,000 family education programmes were conducted in 290 schools, reaching almost 5 million participants. We expanded two evidence-based parenting programmes, Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme) and Signposts, to about 150 schools in 2017 to support parents facing parenting challenges. Findings show significant improvement in perceived parenting competence and reduction in parenting stress. For students who misbehave, schools are encouraged to guide them and help them take responsibility for their behaviours. MOE provides schools with resources such as the Discipline Framework that outlines examples of this approach which schools can adopt. Staff are trained to adopt whole-school approaches to building positive school culture and behaviour management, such as Restorative Practices and Positive Education. These efforts emphasise relationship building and strengths-based approaches as means to change rather than punitive action.

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

73. Singapore adopts a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach to combat violence against children. Please see paragraphs 61-66 above. Singapore established the multi-agency Family Violence Dialogue Group²⁵ to coordinate the national strategy to enhance provisions and services for families and children affected by violence. Six VWO-led Regional Family Violence Working Groups harness community energy to spearhead joint activities to raise awareness of family violence, examine new trends and seek new ways to help families affected by violence. There are also laws and policies that provide additional legal protection for women and girls, such as the Women's Charter.²⁶

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

74. ***As mentioned in paragraph 24 above, Singapore has a system in place to collect and analyse data on child abuse. Singapore conducts extensive research on child protection to inform policies.*** The Inter-Ministry Workgroup on Child Protection (IWCP) recently conducted focus

²⁴ For example, all corporal punishments in JRCs are properly recorded and conducted in the presence of another staff member.

²⁵ The Family Violence Dialogue Group is jointly headed by MSF and SPF, and comprises the Courts, the Prisons, MOH, MOE, chairpersons of Regional Family Violence Working Groups, NCSS and social service agencies.

²⁶ For example, under section 160 of the Women's Charter, the Director of Social Welfare can place a vulnerable girl in a crisis situation, in a shelter, residential facility or in a care of fit individual (i.e. relative or friend).

groups sessions, and surveyed over 350 professionals from various sectors to identify research priorities for the 2015-2019 National Child Protection Research Agenda (see [Annex B](#)).

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

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

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

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

VII. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

A. Family environment, parental guidance (Article 5) and parental responsibilities (Article 18)

Ensure a good start for every child [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.43]

77. *Singapore has expanded support for families to care for children because every child should have a good start.*
78. **Financial support to raise children.** Singapore provides financial support for parents to defray their children's educational, developmental and healthcare expenses. In 2015, we enhanced the Baby Bonus cash gift²⁷ for children born on or after 1 January 2015, by (i) increasing the quantum of the Baby Bonus cash gift by S\$2,000 (US\$1,470) such that 1st and 2nd children receive S\$8,000 (US\$5,880), 3rd and 4th children receive S\$10,000 (US\$7,350), and (ii) extending it to 5th and subsequent children who will receive \$10,000 (US\$7,350). In 2016, we enhanced the Child Development Account (CDA)²⁸ by introducing the CDA First Step for children born from 24 March 2016. This is an initial S\$3,000 (US\$2,200) balance that is put into each child's CDA.
79. **Singapore believes in investing in our children starting from their early years.** We introduced a five-year Child Care Masterplan (2013-2017) to expand capacity for parents who need child care services. Since then, over 40,000 places have been added. We have also expanded subsidies to ensure our children can access affordable childcare and kindergarten services.
80. **Parental leave schemes and flexible working arrangements.** Singapore supports working parents in managing work and family responsibilities. Statutory leave provisions include Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave, Infant Care Leave, Child Care Leave, and Adoption Leave. To encourage active fatherhood, the second week of Paternity Leave, was made mandatory since 1 January 2017. From 1 July 2017, Shared Parental Leave was increased from 1 to 4 weeks, and Adoption Leave from 4 to 12 weeks (see [Annex B](#)). Employers are encouraged to introduce family-friendly work practices such as flexible work arrangements (FWAs). A survey in 2016 found that 82% of employees work in firms offering ad-hoc FWAs and 67% of employees work in firms offering formalised FWAs²⁹. For companies which require more assistance, the WorkPro Work-Life Grant provides up to S\$160,000 (US\$118,000) per company to support employers to introduce and sustain flexible working arrangements. The Government works continually with its tripartite partners to raise awareness and build up capabilities of employers and supervisors to introduce flexible work practices.

²⁷ The Baby Bonus scheme was introduced in April 2001, to support parents by defraying the costs of raising children. It comprises the Cash Gift and the Child Development Account (CDA).

²⁸ The Child Development Account (CDA) is a special savings account. Savings that parents contribute to the CDA will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government, up to the maximum cap. Funds in the CDA can be used for the child's educational and healthcare expenses. These include payment of fees at childcare centres, kindergartens and special education schools, early intervention programmes and healthcare institutions. It can also be used to purchase medical insurance.

²⁹ Source: Conditions of Employment Survey, Manpower Research and Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower. The survey covered private sector establishments each with at least 25 employees and the public sector comprising government ministries, organs of state and statutory boards.

81. ***Additional support for low-income families with difficulty meeting basic needs:***
- a. ***Financial support for school-going children.*** We revised the monthly household income eligibility criteria³⁰ for the Student Care Fee Assistance Scheme in 2016 to assist more children³¹ with before and after school care. Families may also receive a start-up grant up to S\$400 (US\$294) per child to cover the initial costs such as deposit, registration fee, uniform and insurance costs.
 - b. ***Proactive outreach to children from low-income and vulnerable families.*** We piloted KidSTART in 2016 to pro-actively identify children from low-income families and provide them with early access to health, learning and development support as well as monitor their progress during their early years. Parents are provided with resources through home visits, parent education or family support programmes. The three-year KidSTART pilot programme is expected to reach out to about 1,000 children.
82. ***Specialist services to support children from divorced families.*** In 2015, four Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs) were established to provide specialised services and programmes for divorcing and divorced families. DSSAs protect the interests of children affected by divorce by providing the Mandatory Parenting Programme counselling, case management, non-legal advice, family dispute management, and support programmes. Trained counsellors facilitate therapeutic and safe access for the child and his/her parent and help parents work out feasible access arrangements. The goal is to empower divorcing parents to undertake effective co-parenting and build a secure parent-child relationship over time without compromising the child's sense of personal and emotional safety. We have also introduced several schemes to enhance the parenting capabilities of separated parents (see [Annex B](#)).

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

83. ***Singapore enhanced universal subsidies for kindergarten and child care services.*** Singapore citizen children are eligible for a Basic Subsidy of up to S\$300 (US\$220) or S\$600 (US\$440) per month when enrolled in child care or infant care centres respectively. Households with working mothers, in which the household income is up to S\$7,500 (US\$5,500) monthly, can apply for the Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidy. Since the enhancement of Additional Infant and Child Care Subsidies in 2013, working mothers receiving the highest tier of support could pay as little as S\$3 (US\$2.20) per month for full-day child care. Low-income families with extenuating circumstances may apply for further child care financial assistance. They may also apply for a one-time Start-Up Grant of up to S\$1,000 (US\$740) to cover the initial start-up costs of enrolling a child in a centre (e.g. deposit, registration fee, uniforms and insurance fee).
84. Since 2015, the Kindergarten Financial Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) was extended to families of Singaporean children with a gross household income of up to \$6,000 or a per capita income of up to S\$1,500 (US\$1,100). Lower-income families receive a higher quantum of support of up to S\$170 (US\$ 125) in fee assistance per month, compared to S\$108 (US\$80) previously. Families receiving the highest tier of support could pay as little as S\$1 (US\$0.70) monthly. Families requiring additional financial assistance may apply for the Start-Up Grant of up to \$240 (US\$176). About 45,000 children have benefitted from enhanced child care and kindergarten subsidies today, more than double the 17,000 children in 2012.

³⁰ The monthly household income eligibility criterion was raised to S\$4,000 (US\$2,940). A per capita income not exceeding S\$1,000 (US\$735) is used as a parallel criterion for households with 5 or more members.

³¹ Aged 7 to 14 years, or up to 18 years for children with special needs.

B. Separation from parents (Article 9)
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.45]

85. We refer to our previous reports to the Committee. *Singapore maintains its reservations to Articles 9 and 10.* In a small number of situations, separation from parents may occur. For example, where children or parents are incarcerated and visitation rights are withheld by the institution's authorities due to the inmate's misconduct.³² In addition, Singapore's regulations relating to foreigner's pass or permit³³ impose restrictions which include conditions on employment and marriage within Singapore's territory. Family reunification may not always be feasible due to public interest or where safety risks to the child may be imminent because of their parents' violent behaviour.

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

86. We believe children grow best with families and institutionalisation should be a last resort. For child victims, our goal is to help them recover and reintegrate into the community successfully. Children may be deprived of a family environment for many reasons. They may be victims of child abuse or have a fractured relationship with the rest of their family. *Singapore has put in place the following care and protection measures for our children.*

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

87. *A multi-agency committee was set-up in 2013 to review the BPC regime to ensure institutionalisation remains as a last resort.* To implement the committee's recommendations, legislative changes may be needed to emphasise parental responsibility and the role of family and promote community-based interventions in the first instance. The review's scope is consistent with the Guidelines of Alternative Care of Children³⁴.

Research to Address Root Causes of Issues Faced by Children and Their Families [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.47(b)]

88. *Consistent with our data-driven approach to policy reviews, we conduct research to understand the root causes of issues faced by children and families.* For example, we note that girls make up a majority of BPC cases because they place emphasis on maintaining good relationships with significant others. When unable to achieve this, they may face emotional difficulties and exhibit behaviours such as truancy and running away from home. Although there were more female BPC children, male BPC children were at higher risk of engaging in offending behaviour. The research findings suggest differences between male and female children in criminogenic needs and pathways for offending, which in turn indicate a need for the risk assessment in clinical practice and policy making to be sensitive to and responsive to these differences.
89. Our research also found that institutionalised female youth who experienced multiple types of abuse in childhood have more traumatic symptoms, self-reported delinquency and self-harming behaviour in the institutions. This background enables appropriate treatment to be given that could help them address and/or alleviate emotional and behavioural difficulties during their institutional stay. The findings from these research have also been useful when designing and reviewing policies and programmes.

³² Regulation 83(1) of the Prisons Regulation (see CRC/C/51/Add.8/p.53,para.229).

³³ Under the Immigration Act and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, foreigners are required to be in possession of a pass or permit before they can enter, remain and/or work in Singapore.

³⁴ General Assembly resolution 64/142 of 2009

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

90. Child abuse victims need to have a permanent care plan to develop healthily. Singapore has strengthened family-based care and community support for vulnerable children.
91. *To support the growth of children in families, we established the Safe and Strong Families (SSF) pilot in 2017, comprising family preservation service (SSF-P) and family reunification service (SSF-R).* The SSF pilot is grounded in the belief that families are the most ideal environment for children to grow in. Through SSF-P, children at risk of being separated from their families because of safety concerns are provided with intensive support so that they remain safely in their families. For children placed in foster or residential care, SSF-R enables them to return to their families. Through the SSF pilot, families will receive time-limited, intensive support to help them provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. This includes counselling, improving parenting capacity and family functioning. Families will also be connected to community resources if they need additional support.
92. *As children develop best in a family-based environment, kinship and foster care are preferred options for children who are unable to remain safely with their natural families.* To expand Singapore's fostering capacity and build foster care capability within the community, MSF has appointed three Fostering Agencies (FAs). The FAs support foster parents to better care for their foster children as well as broaden foster family outreach and recruitment efforts.
93. *We have also diversified residential care options to suit children's different needs.* Children with higher needs are placed in Small Group Homes where they receive more intensive and specialised care in smaller residential home settings.

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

94. *In line with our upstream efforts to prevent cycles of abuse, neglect and offending, we continuously educate the public on the importance of building strong families.* We work closely with independent bodies (e.g. Families for Life Council and Centre for Fathering) to promote positive parenting, strong and resilient families via public education campaigns. The Families for Life Council engages families through its 365-day engagement approach to build strong and resilient families in Singapore. It brings families a variety of programmes to enhance family life and encourage family time, and also engages them on conversations across various touch points.

**D. Adoption (national and inter-country) (Article 21)
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.49(a),(b),(c)]**

95. The Government has strengthened the safeguards for children in the adoption process since the last report.
96. Since 2012, all prospective adopters must attend a pre-adoption briefing on the adoption process, eligibility criteria and responsibilities of an adoptive parent. This ensures prospective adopters are well-informed about adoption and are mentally and emotionally ready to care for the child whom they wish to adopt.
97. The Government also regularly reviews the adoption process to further strengthen safeguards for children. For example, in 2013, we standardised the requirement for foreign adopters adopting a foreign child in Singapore to obtain their embassy's endorsement of the adoption. We provided a customised letter template for foreign adopters to get their embassy's guarantee

that their home country would recognise the adoption and the adopted child would be granted permission to enter that country.

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

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

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

F. Periodic review of placement (Article 25)

100. We established the Review Board through the CYPAs amendments in 2011. The Board reviews all cases of children admitted to a licensed Children and Young Persons Home. This ensures early planning for each child's welfare and creates a multi-disciplinary platform to work towards a care plan that will best meet the child's specific needs in the longer term.

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

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

H. Protection of children with incarcerated parents

102. Please refer to Singapore's previous reports³⁵ on the special measures Singapore employs to ensure children of incarcerated parents are protected.

³⁵ See CRC/C/51/Add.8/para.229-230; CRC/C/SGP/2-3/para.205

VIII. DISABILITY, BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE

A. Children with disabilities (Article 23)

[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.53(h)]

103. Singapore's vision is to be a caring and inclusive society where persons with disabilities are empowered to achieve their fullest potential and participate fully as integral and contributing members of society. Refer to Singapore's Initial Report to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)³⁶.
104. Singapore has national blueprints for persons with disabilities via our five-year Enabling Masterplans (EMs). The first EM (2007-2011) charted out services and programmes in the disability community. The second EM (2012-2016) adopted a life-course approach (including emphasis on childhood and youth years) and addressed cross-cutting issues such as technology, community integration and accessibility. The third EM (2017 - 2021) guides the development of policies, programmes and services in creating a caring and inclusive society where persons with disabilities will be able to realise their full potential. The Masterplan complements Singapore's efforts to realise our obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The implementation of the recommendations of the third EM is underway.

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

105. *Singapore signed the CRPD in November 2012, ratified it in July 2013 and submitted the Initial Report in July 2016 in support of efforts for persons with disabilities*³⁷. Singapore also acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled in March 2015. The treaty entered into force on 30 September 2016. Singapore's Copyright Act was also amended to facilitate greater access to copyrighted works for people with reading disabilities.

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

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

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

107. An estimated 3% of the resident population has some form of disability. This translates to about 116,000 individuals. The incidence rate of disability among children is 3.2% for those 0 to 6 years old, and 2.5% for those 7 to 18 years old. Data on the special educational needs of children with disability, and the types of schools they are admitted into is captured in Annex C.

³⁶ See CRPD/C/SGP/1:p.17-19,para.3.1-3.9

³⁷ CRPD/C/SGP/1

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

108. *We provide specialised training for professionals working with children with disabilities, which include elements on the rights of the child.* For example, frontline practitioners learn about ‘Promoting Protective Behaviours and Sexuality Education for Children and People with Disabilities’ so that they may better detect and intervene in suspected cases of abuse. Teachers in special education (SPED) schools undergo comprehensive training so that they are better-equipped to deal with students with disabilities³⁸. These teachers are required to be registered and complete the Diploma In Special Education (DISE), a teacher preparatory programme. The DISE, reviewed in 2015, equips beginning SPED teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach SPED children with a range of disabilities. It is aligned to the SPED Curriculum and Vocational Education Frameworks, and also places emphasis on transition planning to post-school pathways and student living, learning and working outcomes. SPED educators are also trained in the pedagogical content knowledge of domain specific areas, such as arts, PE and literacy, and in specific disability domains, e.g. autism spectrum disorders. At the pre-school level, there are Learning Support Educators³⁹ (LSEds) who support children with mild developmental needs within children’s natural settings such as kindergartens and child care centres. In addition, early intervention teachers (EIPIC⁴⁰ teachers) are trained to work with young children between the ages of 0-6 years. Continuing Professional Development courses, such as the Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood Learning Support, are offered to early childhood teachers to enhance their skills in supporting children with developmental needs.

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

109. *The Government provides early intervention and education for children with disabilities and has set up a continuum of support programmes to provide them with a conducive and inclusive learning environment.*
110. The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) provides development and therapy intervention for 0-6 year olds at risk of moderate to severe disabilities. In 2016, 2,900 children benefitted from EIPIC in 19 centres across Singapore.
111. The Development Support Programme (DSP) provides targeted short-term learning or therapy support for children with mild developmental needs in preschools. In 2016, the DSP helped 1,300 children across 350 pre-schools.
112. SPED schools cater for children who have severe disabilities and require specialised support in pursuing education. SPED schools are also well-equipped with facilities such as hydrotherapy pools, sensory-integration rooms and special rooms for therapy and vocational training. Since 2010, all 20 SPED schools have adopted the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)⁴¹ which guides service improvement.
113. There are also support programmes and resources for children with special educational needs in all mainstream primary schools, such as the School-based Dyslexia Remediation programme.

³⁸ See CRPD/C/SGP/1:p.76,para.19.26.

³⁹ LSEds are experienced pre-school teachers trained through the Specialist Diploma in Early Childhood Learning Support (SDELS) at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

⁴⁰ EIPIC teachers are trained through the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Intervention (Special Needs) (ADESN) at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

⁴¹ Key areas include leadership, resource management, family and community partnerships, as well as teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Periodic reviews ensure the effectiveness of the framework.

114. To promote inclusivity, MOE has started a satellite partnership with a mainstream school to provide opportunities for social and academic integration between SPED and mainstream students. Currently, 12 SPED schools have established satellite partnerships with 17 mainstream schools.

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

115. As we have reported in our initial report for the CRPD, there are numerous support provided to parents. Beyond support for parents, we have also developed a guide with practical suggestions on modifying play activities to suit children with different types of abilities. The guide has benefited parents/caregivers, educators and practitioners.

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

116. *Singapore continues to have low child mortality rates in view of the quality healthcare available and advances in obstetric care.* In 2016, the neonatal mortality rate was 1.4 per 1,000 resident live births, and 3.0 per 1,000 live-births and still births for perinatal mortality rate. Infant mortality rate was at 2.4 per 1,000 resident live-births⁴². The major causes of mortality for children under 5 years remain as congenital anomalies and perinatal complications. For children aged 5 to 18 years, the most common cause is cancer.
117. *Singapore systematically encourages preventive health measures such as immunisations, annual health screenings, basic dental services and health promotion activities for school children.* Over 95% of children continue to be immunised against infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, hepatitis B and measles⁴³. In 2015, 40,339 (98%) of the Primary 1 cohort (aged 7 years) and 39,573 (99%) of the Primary 5 cohort (aged 11 years) were screened. In addition, over 95% of the primary and secondary school students screened were rendered dentally fit.
118. *Singapore is committed to ensuring access to quality healthcare infrastructure, facilities and personnel.* In 2015, there were 2.3 doctors and 0.4 dentist per 1000 population⁴⁴. There were also 33 hospital and speciality centres, as well as 18 polyclinics.

**C. Breastfeeding (Article 24, para.2 (e))
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.57]**

119. *Singapore encourages mothers to breastfeed their children as this provides all the energy and nutrients needed for growth, development and protection against infectious and chronic diseases.*
120. *Awareness of breastfeeding.* We recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, and recommend both breastfeeding and complementary foods till 12 months. The Government works with the Association of Breastfeeding Advocacy (ABAS) in Singapore to raise awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding among health professionals and provide support for breastfeeding mothers at the workplace. HPB will fund ABAS to train up to 200 doctors and nurses at 2 polyclinics to provide breastfeeding support to mothers who bring their child for vaccination at 1, 3, 4 and 6 months after birth as well as conduct a breastfeeding survey among mothers who bring their child for vaccination. In addition, all government-funded

⁴² See Annex C, Table 23.

⁴³ See Annex C, Table 26.

⁴⁴ See Annex C, Table 28.

hospitals that offer maternity services in Singapore have met the WHO/UNICEF standards of Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) and are BFHI-certified.

121. ***Sale of Infant Foods Ethics Committee (SIFEC)***. To protect and support breastfeeding, the SIFEC Code of Ethics prohibits the marketing and promotion of breast milk substitutes. The Code currently covers products targeted at infants 0 – 6 months of age. It is likely to be extended to cover products targeted at children 0 – 12 months of age after the completion of an ongoing review. The revised guidelines in the SIFEC Code of Ethics will be in line with that of other countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom. The Code is also generally aligned with the WHO Code.
122. ***Support for mothers to breastfeed at the workplace***. The Employment Act stipulates the statutory basic terms and conditions of employment, which includes maternity breaks. As stated in paragraph 120, government-funded hospitals that provide maternity services are BFHI-certified. Representatives from the tripartite partners – NTUC U Family, Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) and the Health Promotion Board (HPB) – have also jointly developed an Employers’ Guide to Breastfeeding at the Workplace. The guide provides employers with information on what they can do to support their employees to continue breastfeeding after returning to work. In addition, building owners and developers may apply for government grants to establish family-friendly facilities (such as lactation facilities) in their work premises.
123. ***Maternity benefits and protection in the workplace***. Singapore notes the importance of International Labour Convention 183 in promoting maternity protection in the workplace. The Convention ensures maternity protection and benefits to all women. Singapore is currently not able to accede to all its stipulations. In Singapore, all mothers of Singapore Citizen children are covered under the Child Development Co-Savings Act (CDCA), which provides an entitlement of 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. Mothers who are covered under the Employment Act (EA) but whose children are not Singapore citizens are eligible for 12 weeks of maternity leave for all births, of which 8 weeks are paid for the first two births. Mothers under the CDCA and the EA are also entitled to maternity protection.
124. Singapore also enhanced its maternity protection laws recently in 2013 and 2015. Under the Employment Act and Child Development Co-Savings Act, an employer who retrenches an employee or dismisses her without sufficient cause at any point during her pregnancy is liable to pay her maternity benefits that she would have been entitled to if not for the termination. Previously, the employer was liable for the employee’s maternity benefits only if she was retrenched within the last trimester of her pregnancy or dismissed without sufficient cause within the second and last trimester of her pregnancy. Some mothers whose children are not Singapore citizens are not covered under the EA, if they are employed in managerial and executive positions earning more than \$4,500, or are seamen and domestic workers covered under the Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) Act and the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act respectively. These mothers’ maternity leave provisions are negotiated as part of their terms and conditions of employment.

D. Adolescent health (Article 24)

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

125. ***Singapore prioritises universal primary health, preventive health care, and health promotion to promote healthy lifestyles among children and adolescents***. This is done through ingraining healthy habits through their schooling years, scaling up outreach to more health at-risk groups, and developing stakeholder capacity to support and encourage healthier lifestyles in children.

To ensure our policies remain relevant, we conduct Students' Health Survey once every three years to monitor the health behavioural trends of adolescents.

126. ***HPB engages pre-schools to cultivate healthy habits from young, and extends efforts downstream to the institutes of higher learning to sustain healthy habits into adulthood.*** The *Healthier Child, Brighter Future* project, launched in 2012, provides resources and practical tips to help parents to inculcate healthy habits in their children from young. HPB has also worked with schools to nurture healthier eating habits by improving the nutritional quality of meals served in childcare centres, primary and secondary schools. In addition, nurses are also deployed at schools to provide direct support for health at-risk children in areas such as weight management and smoking cessation.
127. ***Singapore adopts an inter-agency approach and a comprehensive strategy in promoting healthy lifestyles and preventing diseases in children and youth in Singapore, especially vulnerable groups.*** In 2016, an Inter-Ministry Taskforce *NurtureSG* was formed for this purpose. It engaged and consulted over 900 members of public consisting of students, parents/caregivers, educators, social workers, counsellors, pre-school operators and less economically advantaged groups from April to June 2016. The objective was to seek the public's views on the health concerns of our children and youth and possible ideas to tackle gaps. The Taskforce's recommendations focussed on three key areas from the public consultations, namely physical activity and nutrition, mental wellbeing and sleep. The recommendations on how to enhance the health outcomes for our children and youth were submitted to MOH and MOE in early 2017 and have since been accepted.

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

128. ***We equip adolescents with knowledge about Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) and HIV/AIDS in schools and the community.***
129. ***It is compulsory for schools to provide sexuality education.*** STI/HIV/AIDS are included in the science curriculum and upper-primary health education syllabus. Students aged 17 and above in Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) and Polytechnics and youth in institutionalised settings are provided with STI and HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. The Government collaborates with relevant organisations to develop age-appropriate information on STIs and HIV/AIDS, resource development and teacher training.
130. ***There are complementary programmes in the community*** to raise awareness among youth about the risk of contracting STI/HIV through casual and unprotected sex. Examples include programmes teaching adolescents about delaying their sexual debut or using effective STI/HIV prevention.
131. ***The STI numbers amongst 10-19 year olds have declined since 2008.*** In 2014, there were 391 persons aged 10-19 years with STI, compared to 820 in 2007. Refer to pages 72-74 of our 2nd and 3rd Periodic Report for HIV-related legislation, early detection and management of HIV-infections.

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

132. Adolescent suicide continues to be low, with slight fluctuations over the years. In 2014, the adolescent suicide rate was 0.9 per 100,000 youth aged 10 to 14 years and 4.0 per 100,000 youth aged 15 to 19 years⁴⁵ with a slight spike in 2015 to 8.2. Despite the low numbers, every suicide is one too many. ***Singapore adopts an inter-agency, multi-pronged suicide prevention***

⁴⁵ See Annex C, Table 25.

approach, in line with the World Health Organisation's Public Health Action for the Prevention of Suicide Framework's recommended approach.

133. ***Part of the suicide prevention strategy involves building mental well-being and resilience in our population.*** The Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)'s regular public education efforts also raise public understanding on suicides and the avenues for help. There are programmes to reduce the stigma around seeking help for mental issues, which is correlated with suicide. For example, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) organises annual World Mental Health day events to increase the public's understanding of mental health. There are complementary efforts by VWOs, such as Silver Ribbon (Singapore), which reach out to persons who need help to build mental wellness and encourage them to seek treatment early.
134. ***The HPB conducts psycho-emotional and change management programmes*** to help students better manage stress, regulate their emotional responses to transitions and develop resilience to deal with adversities. Students are taught to look out for one another and seek help from trusted adults. Schools conduct talks and workshops to equip parents with strategies to support their children's social and emotional development.
135. ***Accessible support services and programmes are available for those identified to be at higher risk.*** For instance, IMH has set up multi-disciplinary Response, Early Intervention, and Assessment in Community Mental Health (REACH) teams to train and support partners, including school counsellors, to better identify and manage at-risk children and make appropriate referrals. Since 2008, every school is assigned at least one school counsellor. If necessary, the counsellors will refer students for further assessment at IMH's Child Guidance Clinic.
136. ***Singapore has sought feedback from the public on mental well-being issues.*** During the *NurtureSG* (see paragraph 127) public consultations, social factors such as issues with interpersonal relationships, lack of communication with parents, concerns of future prospects, and high expectations from parents and students themselves were raised as underlying factors affecting mental wellbeing. Participants shared that more knowledge was needed on how to strengthen mental resilience and where to seek help. Students also identified friends as an important source of advice and support.
137. ***Singapore will continue to study issues surrounding adolescent mental well-being.*** The *NurtureSG* Taskforce was of the view that the mental wellness of our youth needed to be studied further. The Taskforce recommended the formation of the inter-agency research group, which was tasked to conduct a systematic study on youth suicides to establish the contributing factors of suicidal behaviour, including the risk and protective factors of suicide and self-harm behaviour.

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

138. The number of people below 20 years old arrested for drug addiction is generally low, at 8.5% of addicts arrested in Singapore in 2015. Measures to protect children from drug abuse can be found in pages 100-101 of our 2nd and 3rd Periodic report. ***We have enhanced efforts to prevent drug abuse among children as detailed in the paragraphs below.***
139. ***Established Inter-Agency Taskforce to tackle drug abuse.*** In 2014, a Taskforce on Youth and Drugs was established to address the rising number of young drug abusers. The Taskforce focused on more targeted strategies such as prevention, upstream intervention and community engagement. For example, resource toolkits on engaging youth were distributed to parents and educators. Post-secondary education institutions also incorporated anti-drug messages into the curriculum. In 2016, the Committee against Youth Drug Abuse was set up to oversee the

implementation of the recommendations of the Taskforce and serves as a platform to discuss issues such as changing global perceptions toward drug control policies.

140. **Enhanced legal penalties for drug traffickers and recruiters.** In 2012, we amended the Misuse of Drugs Act to target those who recruit young or vulnerable persons into drug trafficking, and to mete out stiffer punishments to those who traffic drugs to young and vulnerable persons. A new offence was created for those who organised drug gatherings, with enhanced punishment for gatherings involving the young and vulnerable.
141. **Enhanced rehabilitation framework for youth to avoid institutionalisation and ensure successful reintegration.** When a first-time young abuser (aged below 21 years) is tested positive for drugs, we now assess the risk of re-offending before deciding where to refer them.
- a. **Low risk cases will be referred to the Youth Enhanced Supervision (YES) Scheme.** Established in 2013, YES introduces casework and counselling to supplement urine supervision for young abusers arrested for the first time. The urine reporting and drug supervision are conducted at the Young Person Reporting Centre (YPRC). Established in 2012, YPRC is a dedicated centre that protects young supervisees from being negatively influenced by older supervisees who are usually hard core addicts.
- b. **Moderate risk cases will be referred to a Community Rehabilitation Centre.** Established in 2014, the Community Rehabilitation Centre is a step-down arrangement for new young drug abusers after a period of detention in a Drug Rehabilitation Centre. Its structured residential services allow youth to continue their education or employment during the day and attend compulsory counselling sessions at the Centre after work or school.
142. **Strengthen anti-drug or anti-smoking advocacy in the community.** The CNB empowers key influencers such as educators, counsellors, parents and National Service Commanders to reach out to youth under their charge and strengthen youth resilience to lead a drug-free lifestyle. Workplace talks, seminars and public exhibitions are held. CNB leverages social media platforms to engage the youth and work with the community organisations to reach out to the public. There are continued efforts to discourage youth from tobacco use⁴⁶, including the National Tobacco Control Programme⁴⁷.

F. Social security (Article 26)

143. Singapore has a robust social security system (i.e. Central Provident Fund (CPF)) to provide financial protection to eligible working Singapore citizens (SC), Permanent Residents and their dependants. **Children qualify for the following benefits under the CPF scheme:**
- a. **MediShield Life Scheme** replaced MediShield in 2015 as the mandatory basic insurance scheme to cover treatment costs of serious hospitalisations. **All citizen newborns are automatically covered from birth, without having to be assessed for pre-existing conditions.** Financial assistance is available for needy Singaporeans to pay the insurance premium.
- b. **Medisave**, a national savings scheme, helps to pay for the medical care and hospitalisation expenses of the CPF Members and their immediate family members. **All SC newborns born on or after 1 Jan 2015, will receive a \$4,000 (US\$2,940) grant** deposited in their Medisave accounts, which helps parents defray the cost of MediShield Life premiums and other healthcare expenses.

⁴⁶ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.71,para.320

⁴⁷ Previously called the National Smoking Control Programme.

- c. **Medifund Scheme** is a Government endowment fund to help needy Singaporeans who are unable to pay for their medical expenses. *In 2013, we introduced the Medifund Junior to provide more targeted assistance for needy Singaporean children.*
- d. Other measures that support families with young children include:
 - i. **Dependents' Protection Scheme** – an insurance scheme that provides basic short-term financial relief for dependents to tide over the initial difficult period, in the event that the CPF member becomes terminally ill, suffers from total permanent disability or pass away; and
 - ii. **Home Protection Scheme** – a mortgage-reducing insurance policy to safeguard families against loss of their flats purchased from the Housing and Development Board (HDB)⁴⁸, in the event that the insured home owner becomes terminally ill, suffers from total permanent disability, or passes away.

144. **Low-income Singaporeans (including children) are provided additional assistance.** The Community Care Endowment Fund provides sustainable funding for assistance programmes for low income Singaporeans. These include subsidies for student care, short term assistance and long term assistance. The size of the ComCare fund has grown from S\$250 million (US\$184 million) in 2005 to S\$1.9 billion (US\$1.40 billion) today (see [Annex B](#)).

G. Standard of living (Article 27, para.1-3)

145. **Children in Singapore enjoy a high standard of living and access to quality education, housing and information technology.** To better support lower-income families, the Government introduced a variety of schemes. For example, *Workfare* ensures that children, no matter their family situation, have access to adequate services and care to meet their needs⁴⁹ (see [Annex B](#)). The *Fresh Start Housing Scheme*, introduced in 2016, helps parents with young children to own a flat so that their children grow up in a stable home environment. The Scheme applies to lower income families who had previously owned a HDB flat, but are now living in a public rental flat. Families who qualify may buy a new short-lease two-room HDB flat, which are more affordable. The flat lease will cover the parent(s) until they are at least aged 95 and comes with a longer minimum occupation period of 20 years to ensure a stable home for the children. Families are given a HDB concessionary-rate loan, priority to select a flat, and a Fresh Start Housing Grant of up to S\$35,000 (USD\$25,700). At the same time, families will be supported in their efforts to stay employed, manage their finances well, and ensure that their children attend school.

⁴⁸ HDB is Singapore's public housing authority

⁴⁹ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.76, para.347-348

IX. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

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

146. ***Singapore prioritises and invests heavily in education for the holistic development of our children.*** We believe that education is a social leveller that enables all Singaporeans, regardless of their background, to realise their potential, achieve their aspirations, therefore building an inclusive society. We want Singapore's children to acquire not just academic knowledge and thinking skills, but also cultural values, social responsibility and life skills.
147. ***To ensure that all children learn at their own pace, we have customised the curriculum for varying ability levels and provided educational pathways to recognise different aptitudes, talents and definitions of success.*** Progress has been made in these areas:
- a. ***Introduced applied learning options*** in mainstream schools so that students acquire skills and develop qualities based on practical applications. All secondary schools will develop an Applied Learning Programme by 2017, which will provide students with more varied learning opportunities.
 - b. ***Set up four specialised Independent Schools*** to provide opportunities for students with specific interests and aptitudes to further develop their passion. These include Singapore Sports School, National University of Singapore High School for Maths and Science, the School of the Arts, and School of Science and Technology.
 - c. ***Established four specialised schools*** in 2013 and 2014, which feature an enhanced curriculum with a more hands-on learning environment and provide work skills certification which allow graduates to proceed to ITE, or to find gainful employment.
 - d. ***Introduced two through-train pathways*** in 2013 for students who do well in their General Certificate of Education (Normal Level) to provide more progression pathways for Normal (Academic) students⁵⁰.
148. ***Singapore respects the right of the parents to decide the best form of education for their children.*** Parents may enrol their children in madrasahs (Islamic religious schools), or home-school the children. To also protect the educational interests of home-schooled children, parents are required to have the requisite educational qualification and work experience, as well as furnish information on the curriculum and educational outcomes of the home-schooling programme. To ascertain the child's educational progress, home-schooled children must sit for the national Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE) at age 12.
149. ***The Compulsory Education Act (CE Act) ensures that all Singaporean Citizens are enrolled in national primary schools up to Primary 6.*** Singapore's net enrolment and completion rates continue to be high⁵¹. The 6-year education aims to give all our children a strong core foundation of knowledge, as well as a common educational experience for nation-building and social cohesion.

Early childhood development

150. ***Singapore believes strongly in early childhood development and has made significant investments in improving the quality of services for children below seven years old.***

⁵⁰ This includes the one-year Polytechnic Foundation Programme, and the two-year Higher National ITE Certificate course, where students who do well can benefit from a Direct-Entry-Scheme to a Polytechnic programme.

⁵¹ See Annex C, Table 31

151. The Government has taken steps to uplift the quality of early childhood development. The Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) was introduced in 2011 as a voluntary quality assurance framework for pre-schools to raise the quality of their centres. The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) was formed in April 2013 to ensure holistic oversight over the sector. The Early Childhood Manpower Plan charts out a comprehensive suite of measures to attract, develop and retain quality early childhood educators. A new Early Childhood Development Centres Act was introduced in 2017 to bring child care centres and kindergartens under the same regulatory framework to ensure more consistent and higher quality standards across the sector.

Sustaining children in schools

152. ***Singapore continues to have a low school drop-out rate and has several programmes in place to address the needs of students at-risk of dropping out***⁵².
153. The Committee for Monitoring Attrition (CMA) was formed in 2008 to continue the work of the Committee on Reducing Attrition in Education⁵³. CMA coordinates and streamlines programmes for students at-risk of dropping out of school and monitors the attrition rate. Since 2010, more than 99% of the Primary 1 cohort completed secondary education. There are also several standing committees that coordinate support for low-achieving students and at-risk learners. The Enhanced STEP-UP programme⁵⁴ was introduced in 2010 to provide holistic support for students at-risk of dropping out of school and out-of-school youth. The VWO-run programme supports students in resolving absenteeism issues and staying engaged in their studies.

Free primary school education [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.59(b)]

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

Ensuring affordability

155. ***We remain committed to providing quality, affordable and accessible education so that no Singaporean student will be left behind due to financial circumstances.*** Education is highly subsidised at all levels, and the Government provides a range of financial assistance schemes, including:
- a. ***Financial Assistance Scheme*** where Singaporean students from disadvantaged backgrounds need not pay school and standard miscellaneous fees and benefit from free textbooks and uniforms. The scheme was expanded in 2012 to benefit larger families and to subsidise school bus and public transport fares in 2015.
 - b. ***Funding for school leaders*** was doubled from S\$5 million (US\$ 3.67 million) to S\$11 million (US\$ 8.1 million) per year from 2015 to 2017 to further target assistance to students from less advantaged backgrounds.

⁵² See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.81-82,para.370-373

⁵³ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.81,para.372

⁵⁴ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.81,para.371

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

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

156. **Singapore has made efforts to engender a less stressful and more creative learning environment for students.** Singapore revamped the PSLE national examination and Secondary 1 posting. With effect from 2021, eight scoring bands, known as Achievement Levels, will replace the current PSLE T-score system. Students' performances will no longer be ranked against their peers. This will reduce competitiveness and allow students to focus on their own learning. The new scoring system will also facilitate better matching of the secondary schools that are the best fit for the child in terms of his or her interests and learning needs.
157. **Our schools provide students with a holistic education focussed on both academic and non-academic areas.** Schools and tertiary institutions are given greater flexibility to set their own criteria that recognise different merits in the students they admit through the Direct School Admission Exercise to secondary schools, and the Discretionary Admissions to the institutes of higher learning such as the Institute of Technical Education, Polytechnics and Autonomous Universities. Co-curricular activities have also been broadened to recognise and give credit to student-initiated activities and community-based activities.
158. **Singapore is keen to promote children's personalities, talents and abilities through culture, the arts and sports.** Refer to paragraphs 171-179.
159. **Singapore has several measures in place to help ensure students are supported in dealing with school-related stress.** See paragraphs 133-134.

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

160. **All students are taught CCE and Social Studies (refer to paragraph 53). Both subjects inculcate values and build competencies in our students to develop them to be informed and participative citizens, with respect for human rights.** In CCE lessons from Secondary 2 to Secondary 5, students learn the importance of: (i) respecting the law which protects human rights; (ii) respecting the diversity of the community; and (iii) contributing towards improving the lives of others. The Social Studies (Primary) curriculum provides opportunities for students to understand their own identities, as well as their roles in the different communities they belong to.
161. Both pre and in-service training are provided throughout the teachers' career to equip them with the necessary CCE knowledge and skills and to nurture classroom environments where students learn to discuss complex issues while respecting others' views, and resolve conflicts appropriately.

B. Children belonging to indigenous and minority groups (Article 30)

Support for students in academic development [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.59(d)]

162. **Singapore is committed to support all children with weaker literacy and numeracy foundations.** Early specialised interventions have been put in place systematically through the Learning Support Programme for English Language and Mathematics for Primary 1 and

Primary 2 in all primary schools. Weaker students continue to receive additional support through structured remediation programmes beyond Primary 2.

163. ***Community Self-Help Groups also provide help to less advantaged children in their respective communities.*** There are community outreach programmes and subsidised educational programmes to help the children thrive. In 2015, four self-help groups⁵⁵ set up a joint venture company to run 30 school-based student care centres to better support the holistic development of students, especially the less privileged.
164. ***Singapore provides programmes to help all academically weak students, regardless of race, and such programmes are complemented by community efforts.*** Community self-help groups including Mendaki for the Malay community, conduct various programmes for students, such as tuition for slower learners. This is a sustainable approach that has worked well.

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

165. ***Singapore is committed to promoting racial harmony and has strengthened its efforts in this area.*** Singapore's signing of the ICERD in October 2015 demonstrates Singapore's commitment to preserve a multiracial society where every person is equal, regardless of race, language or religion.
166. ***We have made efforts to ensure networks of trust are nurtured at the community level.*** The National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony was convened for ethnic, religious, community and government leaders to build networks of trust, and formulate strategies to strengthen community interactions. The Committee provides direction to the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) to nurture similar networks of trust at the local level. The IRCC Steering Committees, formed in 2011, oversee efforts to engage youth and organise major events to build inter-faith and inter-racial harmony.
167. ***Singapore has made significant investments to encourage racial harmony.*** In 2013, Singapore set up a S\$5 million (US\$3.67 million) Harmony Fund to encourage ground-up civic initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of racial and religious tolerance and understanding, deepen interaction between groups, and reduce negative misconceptions about other communities.
168. ***Singapore has made efforts to ensure school curricula teach the importance of racial harmony.*** The importance of racial harmony is explicitly included in history, social studies and CCE lessons. Students are taught the major religions, how to appreciate different cultural practices and the consequences of prejudice. Non-curricular activities include the annual celebration of Racial Harmony Day and ethnic festivals, and Home Stay and Cultural Camps, for students to experience lifestyles of other races.

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

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

⁵⁵ The self-help groups include: (i) Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), (ii) Yayasan Mendaki, (iii) Singapore Indian Development Association and (iv) the Eurasian Association.

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

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

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

Sports

171. *Opportunities for leisure, play and participation opportunities in culture and the arts are provided through schools' co-curricular activities and Physical Education (PE) curriculum*⁵⁶. The PE syllabus was reviewed and the revised syllabus was introduced in stages since 2014. It builds a strong foundation in fundamental movement skills and broad-based development of physical competencies through activities, such as dance, games/sports, gymnastics, and swimming. Outdoor education is included to equip all primary and secondary students with outdoor living skills and imbue in them resilience, tenacity and teamwork.
172. *Singapore encourages young talented athletes to pursue excellence in both academics and sports.* The Singapore Sports School admits more than 100 student-athletes every year, who benefit from its flexible academic setting. The school has significantly contributed to a pipeline of elite national athletes, who have performed well internationally. As at June 2016, the school has produced 10 World Champions, as well several gold medallists at the Asian Games, Commonwealth Games and Southeast Asian Games. The National Youth Sports Institute was also set up in 2015 to drive youth sports development⁵⁷.
173. The *MOE Junior Sports Academy Programme* was implemented in 2015 and identifies budding sporting talents and allows them discover their strength and passion in a range of sports at the primary school level. Annually, around 1% of each cohort is selected to join this programme.

Arts education and Festivals

174. *Singapore believes that the arts are a vital component of every child's holistic development and allows young people to voice their ideas and be engaged with their community.*
175. The *National Arts Council (NAC)* is the lead agency to develop the arts in Singapore. The NAC-Arts Education Programme (NAC-AEP) has been available to schools since 1993 and covers dance, literature, music, theatre and/or visual arts. Annually, more than 340,000 students participate in one of over 2,000 available programmes conducted by professional arts educators, artists and arts groups. In 2014, this programme was extended on a pilot basis to 14 selected pre-schools, and through partnership with anchor operators, has increased in reach to 55 pre-

⁵⁶ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.83.para 384

⁵⁷ This is done through four functional areas: Talent Identification and Development, Youth Coaching, Sports Science and Athlete Life Management.

schools in 2016. The NAC has also launched new arts education programmes since 2012, including arts-based pedagogy for non-arts subjects, arts for children and youth-at-risk. The Arts and Culture Presentation Grant was introduced to provide schools with financial support to put on arts performances and exhibitions for public audiences.

176. A ***Children's Arts Centre*** was also launched in 2016 at the Goodman Arts Centre to provide a dedicated space for schools, children and their families to enjoy the arts through regular programmes across all art forms. Various festivals are organised for children and youth, such as the Singapore Art Week, Singapore Biennale and Noise Singapore. The latter offers music and visual art showcases and mentorship opportunities for young.

Grants and bursaries

177. ***Singapore supports the development of its arts through financial disbursements and awards.*** In 2015, S\$37.6 million⁵⁸ (US\$27.6 million) was disbursed as direct assistance to artists and arts organisations. In addition, NAC confers the National Young Artist Award every year to recognise the artistic achievements and commitment of distinguished art practitioners below 35 years of age. With a grant of up to S\$20,000 (USD\$14,700), the award supports recipients' continued artistic pursuits.

Heritage community programmes

178. ***Singapore supports the development of a vibrant heritage sector that is inclusive.*** The National Heritage Board (NHB) actively promotes a museum-going culture among the young⁵⁹. NHB kick-started several heritage education programmes from 2014 for pre-schoolers and school-going children to foster greater youth interest in Singapore's multi-cultural heritage (see [Annex B](#)).
179. NHB also recently launched a new initiative in cultural philanthropy, ***HeritageCares***, to reach out to children with special needs and from less privileged backgrounds through a range of programmes at national museums, heritage institutions and heritage sites.

⁵⁸ These comprised operating grants, capability development grants, arts housing subsidies and funds for international showcasing.

⁵⁹ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.87-88,para.404-411

X. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

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

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

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

B. Economic exploitation including child labour (Article 32) [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.63]

181. In general, Singapore does not have a problem with the economic exploitation of children, including child labour. Children below the age of 13 years⁶⁰ are prohibited from being employed while those between the ages of 13 to below 15 years old may be engaged in light industrial undertakings where only members of the same family are employed. This addresses the situations, more common in the past, where families running small family businesses sometimes engaged their children to help with miscellaneous or light tasks under their family's supervision. Our employment legislation provides for the protection of the child in respect of the maximum number of hours he may work, time of work and types of work. Violation of these provisions is an offence. As the CE Act today ensures that such children are at school during the school term, incidences of children working is low. To date, there has been no case of infringement regarding the employment or working conditions of children below the age of 16. While there is no specific additional statutory protection for persons from 16 to 18 years old, they are usually either pursuing higher education or vocational training. Singapore will continue to monitor the minimum age of employment and adopt changes where necessary to ensure the continued protection of children in Singapore.
182. *Singapore conducts the Comprehensive Labour Force Survey annually to collect key information on demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population.* This includes working and living conditions of workers regardless of age. To date, no case of infringement has been found regarding child labour.

C. Children in the street situations

183. *Singapore does not have children living in the streets. Singapore has a strong social support system.*

⁶⁰ The Employment Act was amended in 2004 to raise the minimum age of employment from 12 to 13 years old, in line with ILO Convention No. 138.

D. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34)

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

184. *As previously reported, Singapore has robust legislation that punishes perpetrators of sexual abuse for their actions*⁶¹. Singapore's laws are in conformity with its international obligations in this respect, including Article 3(b) of the ILO Convention 182. *Singapore has made further progress in strengthening our legislation to criminalise sexual exploitation and abuse.* The Prevention of Human Trafficking Act (PHTA) was enacted in March 2015. It is now an offence to recruit, transport, harbour, or receive any person including a child for the purpose of exploitation. Please refer to paragraph 190 of this report for details of PHTA. It is also an offence under the Women's Charter to buy, sell, procure traffic or bring in or out of Singapore any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution. It is also an offence to make, reproduce, import, possess, sell or supply (including electronic transmission) any obscene or objectionable publication (including photos) for purposes connected therewith under the Undesirable Publications Act. Making, reproducing, importing, distributing or possessing any obscene films is also prohibited under the Films Act. Singapore is also currently reviewing our laws relating to child pornography and sexual offences committed on minors, including whether the sentences need to be enhanced or whether new laws need to be drafted.

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

185. *Singapore has strengthened support for child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.* Refer to paragraphs 90-93 on shelters for child victims of abuse, including sexual abuse and the therapeutic services provided for their rehabilitation and recovery.

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

186. *Singapore tracks relevant data to inform our support programmes for victims.* Refer to Annex C for data on child abuse investigations involving sexual abuse.

E. Sale, trafficking and abduction (Article 35)

National plan to combat trafficking in persons (TIP)

187. *To outline and implement key strategies to combat TIP in Singapore, we introduced the first National Plan of Action (NPA) in 2012. The roadmap also applies to children.*
188. With the NPA, we have addressed immediate legislative and operational gaps to combat TIP. Our key progress areas include:
- a. Enactment of PHTA (2015);
 - b. Accession to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2015); and
 - c. Ratification of ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2016).
189. To further enhance the measures to combat TIP, the Inter-agency Taskforce on Trafficking-in-Persons launched the *National Approach in 2016* (see Annex B). The plan sets out key strategies and outcomes to guide the work of Government and community stakeholders.

⁶¹ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.101-102,para.482-487

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

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

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

191. ***Trafficked victims are not treated as offenders.*** They are not deported at the first instance, and are permitted to stay in Singapore to assist with investigations. The PHTA mandates provision of shelter, food and counselling services, and avails a range of support measures to be customised according to victims' needs. Section 16 of the CYPA provides for child victims of trafficking to be placed in shelters for their safety. Singapore has also worked with VWOs to facilitate reunification of trafficked victims with their families. As the number of international TIP cases are small, this is facilitated on a case by case basis.
192. ***We protect the confidentiality of the child victims and their identity, and thereby also encourage reporting.*** The measures protect the victims' confidentiality and include mandatory in-camera court proceedings for child victims, media gag order for all proceedings involving sexual exploitation and protection for informers reporting TIP activity.
193. ***We also invest in building up capabilities to ensure early detection by police officers. We have:***
- a. Set-up a dedicated sex TIP team in the Criminal Investigation Department;
 - b. Developed a 'Trafficking In Persons card' to help officers recognise signs of trafficking;
 - c. Provided regular trainings for officers alongside their international counterparts.

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

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

Bilateral and multilateral agreements [CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.67(e)]

195. ***Singapore has strengthened its international cooperation efforts to prevent TIP.*** Singapore ratified the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in January 2016. We also work with international law enforcement counterparts for

training purposes. For example, we partnered the French Embassy and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Toronto Police Service⁶² to build capacity for ASEAN frontline officers.

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

196. *Singapore acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in September 2015.*

**F. Protection for victims and witnesses of crimes (Article 39)
[CRC/C/SGP/CO2-3, para.70]**

197. Singapore's measures to protect child witnesses and victims have been covered in our previous reports to the Committee. In general, *a child's best interest takes precedence for any investigation and court proceeding.*
198. *Care is taken during court proceedings to avoid embarrassment, shame and pressure on a child involved in the proceedings. No family members are usually present unless the child feels more comfortable to talk in the presence of an adult family member during the proceedings. Alternatively, a trained volunteer can be allocated to accompany the child during the trial. Trained volunteers are from the Singapore Children Society.*
199. *During police investigations, AAs⁶³ may be activated to support the child and aid communication, where appropriate.* These AAs are independent, trained individuals, and would not include family members or relatives. The AA scheme applies to individuals, including children with mental or intellectual disability.
200. *Victims are also supported through the provision of emotional support and return to normalcy as soon as possible.* The Victim Care Cadre scheme was introduced in 2014. The scheme supports victims emotionally and refers victims to appropriate medical and mental health services and social resources to better cope with emotional distress and trauma following the crime. The victim care officers are volunteers trained by the Police Psychological Services Department to emotionally triage and stabilise victims of sexual offences to facilitate investigations. Today, these victim care officers may be activated for sexual offence cases. There are ongoing plans to further extend the scope of vulnerable victims for which such activations are eligible.
201. Although in general, a report is required for Police to initiate investigations, even in the absence of a police report, our laws allow the Police to initiate investigations if there is reason to suspect injustices involving the young or vulnerable victims. Investigations may commence upon receipt of credible information without requiring victims to lodge a report for themselves.
202. For details relating to TIP victims see paragraphs 191-195.

G. Other forms of exploitation (Article 36)

203. *Singapore reviews our laws regularly to ensure that our laws are current in achieving the objective of protecting children from all forms of exploitation.*

⁶² The Toronto Police Service conducted a five-day course "Using Internet as an Investigative Tool for Child Exploitation Investigations" in Singapore in November 2014.

⁶³ See CRPD/C/SGP/1:p.48,para.8.1-8.4

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

204. The Singapore youth justice system emphasises early identification and intervention for optimal rehabilitation. *The National Committee on Youth Guidance and Rehabilitation*⁶⁴ (NYGR) *has taken on a more proactive and strategic role since forming a Steering Committee and Working Group in 2011*. Beyond identifying service gaps for supporting youth offenders from 12 to 21 years old, NYGR effects systemic changes to ministries. The NYGR had supported the introduction of the triage system for young offenders, where risk and needs assessments are completed as part of the police investigation process (see paragraph 214). The NYGR is supported by the Central Youth Guidance Office (CYGO), which coordinates multi-agency upstream efforts to break cycles of offending.
205. **Early intervention.** The Youth GO! Programme (YGP) was introduced as an upstream intervention to reduce youth crime, where mobile teams build social relationships with youth on the streets before providing intervention. Out-of-school youth above 16 years old may also access Workforce Singapore or Employment and Employability Institute career centres for vocational training and job placement. The Youth-At-Risk Engagement Framework introduced in 2016 enhances sector capability to identify at-risk youth and work with them using evidence based/informed practices with incorporated evaluation.
206. **Diversion from Court.** Youth justice in Singapore is premised on graduated intervention, based on rehabilitative needs of the young offender. By diverting young offenders away from the criminal justice system, they are held accountable for their actions without disrupting other aspects of their development such as family and school. Pre-court diversionary programmes include the Guidance Programme (GP)⁶⁵ and Enhanced Streetwise Programme (ESWP). GP is for young offenders up to 18 years old who committed minor offences while ESWP is for young offenders who played a minor role in gang-related offences. GP and ESWP are case management programmes which impart lifeskills to minimise their risk of reoffending and steer them away from gangs. The young offenders' family and school are also involved to provide additional support. The types of offences eligible for GP was expanded in 2012. Instead of being charged in Court, youth would be given a warning upon completing the programme successfully.
207. **Community Rehabilitation.** Under the CYPA, children below 16 years who commit offences are charged in the Youth Court. The Youth Court employs Restorative Justice Principles while balancing the need for effective deterrence. Cases involving young offenders aged 16 to 18 years are handled by the Community Court. There has been a general fall in youth, aged below 18 years old, arrested from 3,156 in 2009 to 2,477 in 2015. The sentencing of juvenile offenders and the range of non-custodial options available to the Youth Court are outlined in Singapore's Initial Report⁶⁶. MSF continues to make recommendations on the young offenders' suitability for community rehabilitation via probation. The Progress Presentation Review foregrounds probationers' honest self-assessment of their progress, including new skills learnt and life changes made, and would be bolstered by testimonials of adults observing the progress made.
208. **Reintegration of youth offenders.** Singapore believes in reintegrating youth offenders into society. The Yellow Ribbon Project continues to create awareness, acceptance and inspire community action and the Yellow Ribbon Fund facilitates programmes that reintegrate ex-offenders into the community. Fund raising efforts raised over S\$3 million in 2015. More than half was disbursed to support the reintegration of ex-offenders with their families, benefitting more than 5,000 beneficiaries. The campaign has enhanced its digital presence to reach out to

⁶⁴ See CRC/C/SGP/2-3:p.91,para.431

⁶⁵ The GP completion rate increased from 88% in 2009 to 91% in 2015. The 3-year recidivism rate ranges from 11.9% for the 2009 cohort to 12.8% for the 2011 cohort.

⁶⁶ See CRC/C/51/Add.8:p.49-50,para.213-217

the online community. The Yellow Ribbon Projects' community events have helped Singaporeans gain a deeper understanding of the reintegration journey faced by ex-offenders.

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

209. *As previously stated in our reports, the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 7 years old.* This allows us to address risks elements early in young offenders which is the best opportunity for a crime-free future. In addition, the CYPA provisions account for evolving maturity levels of children as they develop.
210. *In any event, Court diversionary measures are already in place, and emphasised, to redirect offenders who are 19 years and below who commit minor crimes, away from the criminal justice system, and into community-based rehabilitation programmes.* Where such offenders are charged in court, the rehabilitative and restorative approach of our youth justice system allows for them to be rehabilitated using a broad range of community and residential-based measures, depending on the needs and risks of such offenders. Furthermore, the words, "conviction" and "sentence", cannot be used in relation to offenders dealt with by a Youth Court as the intent is to avoid criminalising them. The focus on rehabilitation to address delinquent behaviour early serves their interests in the long run.
211. *Singapore has implemented safeguards to ensure young offenders with intellectual disabilities are given appropriate consideration.* See paragraph 206.

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

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

212. Singapore is committed to ensuring that sentencing and detention take into consideration the best interest of the child. As stated in our previous reports, there is a range of sentencing options under Singapore laws. These options allow the Courts to calibrate the sentence by considering relevant factors, primarily the best interests of the child.
213. *We have also made progress in our efforts to target vulnerable youth and divert them away from criminal activities and processes.* As a result, there is a general decline in admissions to the MSF Youth Homes, from 365 youth in 2009 to 244 youth in 2016 as more youth offenders are diverted from the Court system or rehabilitated within the community.
214. *Triage at point of Police investigations and arrest.* In 2016, we rolled out a new triage system at police stations for youth aged up to 18 years in conflict with the law. As part of the police investigation, the triage officer (a social worker) interviews the youth with their parents to gain insight into their social background and links them to support services. *This triage assessment helps police gauge the youth offender's suitability to be diverted from the criminal justice system, while the youth's social needs are attended to early.* Suitable youth are channelled to pre-court diversionary programmes, such as GP and ESWP, in lieu of being charged.
215. *Appropriate Adults Scheme for young suspects.* In 2017, an AA Scheme was introduced to enhance support for young suspects interviewed by Police and Central Narcotics Bureau. These independent and trained AAs accompany young suspects during statement taking to provide emotional support or aid communication as necessary.

216. *Improved education for young persons in secured care.* In 2010, we transformed the educational system in MSF Youth Homes. Full-time Ministry of Education teachers were seconded to the Homes to align the Homes' academic curricula to national standards. The libraries and science laboratories were also upgraded. Today, vocational tracks are provided to some residents to increase their job competitiveness. Workforce Singapore or Employment and Employability Institute career centres facilitate their reintegration by providing vocational training and job placement support.

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

217. There are many community-based and residential orders that the Court may make for youth who are prosecuted, depending on the nature of the case and the offender's circumstances. If deemed unsuitable for residential rehabilitation in a MSF Youth Home, the youth may be ordered to reformatory training or imprisonment. As far as possible, those under 21 years of age and sentenced to imprisonment are housed separately from adult offenders. From 2008 to 2015, the number of young offenders under 18 years who were sentenced to imprisonment or reformatory training fell by 65.1%. *The decline may be attributed to 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.*

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

218. *Consistent with article 37(a) of the CRC, a young person who has been convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment may apply to MHA for his case to be reviewed and possibly released, after serving a minimum of 20 years of the prison sentence.* In addition, youth sentenced to life imprisonment will go through a prison regime with opportunities to participate in rehabilitative activities. Depending on their progress and behaviour, they may work in workshops within the institution or be employed on vocational and educational programmes. They are also given opportunities for family contact.
219. *The Criminal Procedure Code does not allow the death penalty to be imposed on a person under the age of 18 years at the time of commission of the offence.* Such persons will be sentenced to life imprisonment instead.

K. Training activities for professionals in youth justice system

220. *Professionals are trained to use restorative practices for rehabilitative treatment and equipped to work with youth offenders.* For example, Police officers must be trained on child abuse to improve their child interviewing techniques. In reformatory training centres, staff have to undergo correctional rehabilitation training. Professional staff in Juvenile Rehabilitation Centres and MSF Youth Homes are trained to use restorative practice and processes as a treatment mode.

XI. RATIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

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

221. Singapore engages seriously with treaty bodies, fulfils treaty obligations judiciously, reviews reservations where appropriate, and welcomes shared learning on implementing human rights. Singapore may not be party to certain human rights treaties, but our domestic policies are generally in compliance with their substance. Our policy is to keep core human rights treaties under review.
222. Singapore ratified the CRPD on 18 July 2013 and submitted the Initial Report to the CRPD in July 2016. Singapore also signed the ICERD on 19 October 2015, and is expected to ratify the ICERD in 2017.
223. Singapore acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in September 2015.

XII. OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A. Follow-up: Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Articles 34, 35 and 36)

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

B. Follow-up: Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (Article 38)

225. Please refer to Singapore's Initial Report for OPAC. Singapore has not experienced any armed conflict since its independence in 1965. *No child has been recruited and used in hostilities by armed groups, or placed in demobilisation and reintegration programmes, and none have been charged with war crimes.* There are no child victims of practices prohibited by the OPAC among the refugee and asylum-seeking children that have been encountered by Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) troops deployed as part of UN peacekeeping operations. As observed in paragraph 180, we have not had any unaccompanied minors in Singapore in the recent past. Nonetheless, if they are found within Singapore, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) would work with the UNHCR to facilitate their resettlement. The introduction of the CE Act in 2000⁶⁷, made it mandatory for all children who are citizens to attend a national primary school regularly. The high proportion of children aged below 18 who are gainfully pursuing education⁶⁸ minimises the likelihood of them being recruited and engaged in hostilities. In addition, Singapore ensures that relevant provisions under the various articles of the OPAC are provided for in our legislation (See our Initial Report for OPAC).

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

226. *Singapore implements our obligations under the OPAC through domestic legislation.* The two key pieces of legislation are the SAF (Volunteers) Regulations and the Enlistment Regulations⁶⁹. Any person may report violations of his/her rights under OPAC to the Singapore Courts by citing the relevant provision in the legislation implementing the OPAC.

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

227. We note the Committee's comments in paragraph 8 of the Concluding Observations regarding an independent complaints mechanism. Servicemen are briefed on the multiple channels of providing feedback, complaints and seeking redress during enlistment, all of which apply equally to early enlistees below the age of 18. These channels are also covered in the Recruit's Handbook which is made available to all enlistees. The procedures for seeking redress are set out in the General Orders of the Ministry of Defence.
228. Servicemen are supported through the SAF Counselling Centre's 24-hour hotline that is availed to all servicemen and their families. All calls are kept confidential and callers may choose to

⁶⁷ The CE Act took effect from the Primary 1 cohort in 2003.

⁶⁸ See Annex C, Table 32.

⁶⁹ These were amended in July 2008 to align ourselves with the obligations of the OPAC.

remain anonymous. *Servicemen and their family members may also call the hotline to discuss their concerns regarding issues pertaining to National Service.*

229. *The SAF has established procedures for servicemen to seek redress through the chain of command.* If the serviceman is dissatisfied with the action taken by his commanders, he may raise the issue in writing to the Armed Forces Council, which is chaired by the Minister for Defence.
230. In addition, there is a confidential disclosure mechanism where disclosures are surfaced to senior MINDEF officials who are outside the chain of command. All such disclosure will be treated with utmost confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the discloser, to the extent feasible and permissible under the law.

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

231. The obligations of the OPAC are disseminated to the relevant departments of MINDEF and the SAF. SAF personnel being deployed to international peacekeeping missions are required to undergo pre-deployment training on human rights, Law of Armed Conflict, protection of civilians, gender awareness and Rules of Engagement to ensure that they conduct themselves responsibly during their mission.
232. MSF has created a webpage on the OPAC with relevant information and created a special graphic in layman language to raise awareness of the OPAC principles and provisions.

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

233. The SAF aligns itself with the main provisions of the OPAC. *Members of the SAF who are under 18 years old do not take part in hostilities; the minimum age for compulsory recruitment into the SAF is 18 years old; and the minimum age of voluntary recruitment is 16 years and 6 months old.* The Voluntary Early Enlistment Scheme serves those who complete their basic educational qualifications before 18 years old and would like to enlist for full-time National Service earlier. It allows them to enter the workforce faster, or complete their full-time National Service before proceeding for university studies. Only a small number of such servicemen are enlisted.
234. *All servicemen including those volunteers between 16 and a half to 18 years old are subject to military law under the Singapore Armed Forces Act to ensure equality of justice within the SAF.* However, it should be noted that safeguards are in place within the military justice system to ensure parity with the civil courts. For example, presiding judges of the subordinate military court are serving or former civil court judges. In addition, the military court of appeal consists of a president who is a Supreme Court Justice and includes two civilian lawyers.
235. As proper discharge of military duties is critical to the security and stability of Singapore, *the notification period of 3 months for leaving the volunteer force is necessary to ensure proper handing over of duties, as well as allow sufficient time for a suitable replacement to be trained and deployed.* The 3-month notification period is also applied consistently across the different military schemes for regular servicemen.

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

236. Please refer to information under Article 14 for information on CCE and ‘Racial Harmonisation’ under Article 30.

237. ***Teachers are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge to facilitate discussions among students on issues related to human rights and peace education***, such as rights and responsibilities of citizens in a country and tensions arising from ensuring the security of a country whilst maintaining the right of individuals to have freedom of movement. All teachers undergo the Beginning Teachers Orientation Programme, which explores the role of teachers in the classroom in the delivery of CCE. Teachers are reminded not to impose their views on students, but facilitate learning while keeping in view teachers' professional ethics, societal norms of Singapore and cultural and religious values of students' families. To facilitate the teaching of CCE lessons, MOE provides all teachers with lesson ideas. These lesson ideas provide a range of strategies on how they can engage students during CCE lessons, including exploring issues related to human rights and peacekeeping.
238. ***The Revised Social Studies Syllabus explores the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a country***. An example highlights the efforts of Malala Yousafzai in championing the rights of children to education. Another section explores the tensions arising from ensuring the security of a country whilst maintaining the right of individuals to have freedom of movement, e.g. using the example of No-Fly lists developed by governments.
239. ***Social work students from the National University of Singapore must attend a compulsory module to learn about social work education, advocacy, social justice and human rights***. The module emphasises that human rights and social justice are fundamental values of social work. The Bachelor of Social Work programme offered by the Singapore Institute of Management ⁷⁰ includes an elective course on Social Advocacy which is anchored on the values of rights and social justice.

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

240. ***The penalty under Regulation 40 of the Enlistment Regulations (Cap. 93, Reg. 1) for contravening Regulation 14⁷¹ under the Enlistment Regulations is a sufficient deterrent to prevent any conscription of children below the age of 16 years and 6 months or the involvement of enlistees in direct hostilities***. To date, there have been no prosecutions made under Regulation 14. Hence, there is little impetus to amend legislation as recommended by the Committee. Singapore currently does not have any plans to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

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

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

⁷⁰ Course commenced from August 2016

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

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

242. See paragraphs 69-71 above.

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

243. See paragraph 180 above.

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

244. *SPF regulates the export and import of small arms and light weapons through the Arms & Explosive Act.* Licenses and permits are required to export or import such weapons. SPF scrutinises relevant documents from countries of origin and final destination before issuing the appropriate authorisations. There are measures to ensure that the weapons being exported out of Singapore are meant for bona fide recipients and not diverted into illicit channels that may include supplying arms to child soldiers. SPF will also not authorise arms exports to countries that are under the relevant sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council.

245. Singapore will consider the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as well as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction as part of its review on the international agreements to ratify or accede. When Singapore ratifies or accedes to a treaty, Singapore wants to ensure that it has the necessary legislation and resources in place to implement its obligations immediately.

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

246. The IMC is tasked to communicate and implement the articles of the OPAC.

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

**C. Follow-up: Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure
[CRC/C/OPAC/SGP/CO/1, para.28]**

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