

**Written Submission of the Republic of Singapore Submitted in Response to
the United Nations Secretary-General’s Call for Information on the
“Intensification of Efforts to Prevent and Eliminate all Forms of Violence against
Women and Girls: Gender Stereotypes and Negative Social Norms”**

Singapore welcomes the opportunity to provide information relating to the implementation of General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/75/161 and A/RES/77/193 on “Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: gender stereotypes and negative social norms”.

2. Singapore is committed to fostering a society where every woman and girl can live free from violence and discrimination, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions. To this end, we have undertaken comprehensive initiatives to eliminate harmful gender norms and prevent violence against women and girls.

Eliminating Harmful Gender Norms

Awareness and Education

3. Singapore recognises that efforts to shift mindsets on gender norms need to start from young. The Government takes a holistic and age-appropriate approach to promote gender equality and counter gender stereotypes through education. Through our national curriculum, students learn from young to treat others with respect, both online and in-person, and that no one should violate their rights to safety. Students learn not to be limited by gender stereotypes when considering education and career pathways, and to recognise the importance of equal opportunity, regardless of gender, at home, in school, and at the workplace.

4. The safety of our students is of paramount importance and concern. To this end, we educate our young to protect themselves from sexual violence. Students are taught how to establish and navigate healthy boundaries, including respecting the right of others to say “no” and knowing when and how to seek help. In addition, the curriculum includes learning outcomes on gender-based violence and the prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The curriculum is also supplemented by Police-led school talks that focus on the prevention of sexual offences to promote awareness of personal safety and respect for boundaries among youths.

Engaging Men and Boys as Allies for Change

5. Singapore recognises the importance of engaging men and boys as allies in our pursuit of a fairer and more inclusive society. In this regard, the White Paper on Singapore Women’s Development, which was the product of a year-long initiative titled “Conversations on Singapore Women’s Development”, emphasises the importance of mindset shifts, through education and policies to encourage equal partnerships between men and women. For example, to promote equal partnerships in caregiving and shift

mindsets on familial roles, the Government-Paid Paternity Leave was increased in 2024 from two to four weeks on a voluntary basis, to encourage greater paternal involvement. We are also working with key partners and stakeholders to make Singapore a safe and empowering place for all. Civil society organisations such as United Women Singapore run a “Boys Empowered” programme that creates a safe space for males to have conversations about healthy masculinity, male allyship, personal boundaries, and the concept of gender stereotypes.

Developing Empathy and Trust

6. The Singapore Police Force provides touchpoints for women and girls affected by violence and recognises the importance of gender-sensitive training for its frontline officers, who may interact with vulnerable persons, including women and girls who are victims of violence and sexual crime. It provides specialised training for frontline officers and investigation officers to deal with a wide range of issues, including the causes of victim trauma, the needs of victims, the vulnerabilities faced by victims and victim management. Investigative Officers who work on cases of sexual crime must also undergo an intensive sexual crime investigation course. Not only do they learn about victim-centred approach, but they also sharpen their knowledge of investigative principles and processes; interview techniques with active listening skills; and victim management methods. This helps to ensure that interviews and investigations involving victims of family violence and sexual offences are conducted sensitively and professionally.

Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls

7. Singapore is a State Party to both the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Along with this is a commitment toward protecting the rights of women and girls from violence.

Legislative Levers

8. In Singapore, the **Women’s Charter (WC)**, **Penal Code (PC)**, and the **Protection from Harassment Act (POHA)** are our primary legislative levers in combating violence against women and girls. These pieces of legislation address family violence, sexual violence, and violence against women and girls both in online spaces and the physical domain. We continually review our laws to ensure that they stay relevant. For instance:

- (a) The **WC** was amended in 2023 to empower survivors to better protect themselves, strengthen the Government’s ability to intervene in family violence cases, and empower the Court to make additional rehabilitative orders, raise penalties and strengthen enforcement against breaches of family violence-related Court orders and rehabilitative orders (e.g., counselling orders and mandatory treatment order). The legislative amendments also made clear that the definition

of family violence covers physical, sexual, and emotional or psychological abuse. Egregious coercive control behaviours that constitute emotional or psychological abuse are also covered in the updated definition.

(b) The **PC** was amended in 2019 and significant updates were made to our sexual offences. For instance:

- a. We repealed marital immunity for rape and introduced enhanced penalties for offences committed against those in intimate or close relationships with the offender.¹ This means that an offender who rapes his spouse is now not only liable for rape, but is also liable for up to double the maximum punishment for rape, i.e. 40 years' imprisonment instead of 20 years' imprisonment.
- b. In addition, we also enhanced penalties for offences committed against other vulnerable victims, such as minors and domestic workers.²

(c) The **POHA** was amended in 2019 to make it faster and easier for victims of harassment, including women, to obtain relief. We also established the Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) which commenced operations in June 2021. The PHC generally hears applications for Expedited Protection Orders within 2 to 3 working days from the date of the application and within 24 hours where there is a risk of violence or actual violence.

Navigating the Future

Addressing Tech-Facilitated Violence

9. With the rapid advancement of technology and the widespread availability of the internet, Singapore places strong emphasis on enhancing the protection of women and girls from online exploitation. Singapore regularly reviews our laws to reflect developments in technology-related crimes, with particular attention paid to sexual offences.

10. The **PC** was amended in 2019 to better address technology facilitated sexual crimes.³:

- (a) We introduced new offences to specifically target **voyeurism**,⁴ **as well as distributing or threatening to distribute intimate images or recordings**.⁵ We also introduced a new offence of sexual exposure, which criminalises the non-

¹ Criminal Law Reform Act 2019 (CLRA), s 110; Penal Code, ss 74C and 74D.

² Penal Code, ss 73, 74A and 74B.

³ E.g., CLRA, ss 113, 117. See Penal Code, ss 376EA to EE.

⁴ Penal Code, ss 377BB to 377BD.

⁵ Penal Code, ss 377BD to 377BE.

consensual exposure of a victim to genitals, such as sending unsolicited images of genitals over an electronic medium to another person (also referred to as “cyber-flashing”).⁶

- (b) We further **introduced offences and increased penalties to deal decisively with child abuse material.**⁷ These offences criminalise a wide range of activities pertaining to child abuse material, from production to distribution and possession of abusive material, which are often committed using digital means. The penalties for these offences are stiff and reflect our society’s abhorrence for such conduct.
- (c) We have **scoped our laws to provide protection even in cases involving emerging technologies like “deepfakes” facilitated by artificial intelligence.** For example, our offences relating to intimate images were drafted to cover images that have been *altered* to depict a victim, such as when an offender transplants a victim’s face onto an image of someone else engaging in a sexual act.⁸

11. **The Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act**, which came into effect on 1 February 2023, introduced provisions which allowed us to regulate Online Communication Services (OCSs), which includes social media services. These amendments tackle the issue of online safety on OCSs in an accretive and outcome-driven manner and empowers Singapore’s Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) to do the following:

- (a) **Issue directions to disable access by Singapore users to egregious content found on OCSs.** Egregious content is defined in the legislation and includes content that advocates or instructs on physical violence against humans, sexual violence, and content that is child sexual exploitation material.
- (b) **Designate OCSs with significant reach or impact to comply with Codes of Practice.** IMDA issued the Code of Practice for Online Safety – Social Media Services (CoP for SMSs) in July 2023 to require designated SMSs to have systems or processes in place to minimise Singapore users’ exposure to harmful content, with additional protection for children. This includes having in place community guidelines, providing users with access to tools and reporting mechanisms to help them manage their own safety, and publishing annual online safety reports on their measures and levels of safety. The CoP for SMSs identifies six categories of harmful content, which includes sexual content, violent content, and suicide and self-harm content.

12. We also introduced the **Online Criminal Harms Act (OCHA)** in 2023 to protect persons in Singapore, including women and girls, from online criminal

⁶ Penal Code, s 377BF.

⁷ Penal Code, ss 377BG to 377BL.

⁸ See Illustration (a) to Penal Code, s 377BE.

activities. This includes the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images and the distribution of child sexual abuse material. The Act empowers law enforcement agencies to issue directions to online service providers, other entities, or individuals to prevent online criminal activities from interacting with or reaching Singapore users.

Building Partnerships

13. In our commitment to creating a safer online environment for women and girls, we have partnered technology companies, civil society, and the public to develop resources to enhance the safety of women and girls online.

14. For instance, the Government in partnership with technology companies such as Google, Meta, ByteDance and X (formerly Twitter), developed the **Online Safety Digital Tools Resource Kit**. The resource kit compiles online platforms' safety features, to equip users with information on how to manage their safety online and report online harms encountered.

15. SG Her Empowerment, a non-profit organisation that works with the community and various partners to empower women and girls, set up a centre to support victims of online harms called SHECARES@SCWO. This centre is supported by full time counsellors, pro bono legal clinic and volunteers. Beyond counselling, the support centre also guides victims/survivors on the next course of action, such as informing the victim to make a police report. Victims/survivors can reach out to them via WhatsApp and email.

16. Together, these collaborations have fostered a community of awareness and support. By leveraging the strengths of the private and the non-profit sectors, we are making meaningful strides towards a safer digital world.

Conclusion

17. Singapore remains steadfast in its commitment to promoting gender equality and preventing violence against women and girls. We achieve this through sustained efforts, multi-sectoral collaboration, and the active participation of all members of society.

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