
Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO):

Equality for Women is Progress for All: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Singapore



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INTRODUCTION

“The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared in his International Women’s Day message earlier this year.

And the evidence does show that countries with higher levels of higher gender equality perform better in education and have better economic growth. Peace agreements that include women’s voices are more durable and parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues, including health, violence against women and child support. Also, companies with more women leaders have higher returns for shareholders.

Unfortunately, gender equality has not taken root everywhere, and while important gains have been made in access to primary education for girls and political representation by women since the launch of Millennium Development Goals in 2000, such progress remains far too slow and uneven.

Singapore is one of 189 countries that adopted the Millennium Declaration and committed to the Millennium Development Goals set out in 2000. While Singapore does not give official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries, it has been helping less well-off nations to achieve MDGs through its technical assistance programme and by, for example, training government officials from over 170 countries in the Asia Pacific, Africa, Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

How is a developed country like Singapore faring against the eight MDGs?

1. ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

While Singapore ranked as the world’s 3rd richest country in 2012¹ not everyone can be said to have benefited proportionally from Singapore’s robust economic growth, particularly older low-wage workers (with less than \$1500 work income per month), and increasingly, the female elderly. With global competition, wage workers are affected by wage stagnation and structural unemployment, while longer life expectancy and low income security have led to a higher number of needy female elderly in Singapore². Moreover, about 10 to 12 percent of Singapore’s resident households, comprising 110,000-140,000 households live with a combined household income of S\$1500³ and below, while at the same time income inequality has risen significantly⁴. It has been estimated that a family of four would need \$1,700 to cover basic costs of living⁵, but \$2,500- 3,000/month to meet a “social inclusion” level of income⁶.

¹ Forbes (22 February 2012) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/bethgreenfield/2012/02/22/the-worlds-richest-countries/>

² International Longevity Centre – Singapore (2011)

³ Based on the Average Household Expenditure on Basic Needs (AHEBN), and calculated by the Department of Statistics, an average of S\$1,250-1,500 per month is needed to meet the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter in a reference poor household living in a one to two-room Housing and Development Board (HDB) or government rental flat, multiplied by a factor of 1.25 to account for other household needs like transport, education and other necessary expenditures for normal living. \$1,500 income limit threshold is also used in various welfare assistance schemes in Singapore.

⁴ Over the last 10 years, the Gini coefficient for Singapore has increased from 0.433 to 0.452.

⁵ Kishore Mahbubani, “Why Singaporean Leaders Believe in Government Action”, the Straits Times (11/12/2010)

⁶ Li Xueying and Zakir Hussein, “Widening Wage Gap. Does it Matter?”, The Straits Times (11/12/2012)

Singapore does not adopt a poverty line, but rather multiple lines of assistance⁷ which are tailored to different groups, depending on their needs and circumstances. Social assistance, however, is seen as a short-term and last-resort support, rendered to the ill, the unemployed, aged poor and the disabled.

1.1 Singapore's social protection

Singapore's social protection approach is anchored by 4 pillars – the Central Provident Fund (CPF,) a compulsory comprehensive retirement savings plan, the Housing Development Board (HDB) which oversees the development and availability of public housing, the “3Ms” medical insurance scheme (MediSave, MediShield and MediFund) and Workfare, an income/savings supplement scheme for low income workers.

The government administers welfare programs through the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), which in turn partners with communities, for example, the Community Development Councils (CDCs), voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and religious organisations. Other government ministries and agencies involved in social protection and support include the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) which addresses labour issues and the Central Provident Fund (CPF) which helps to facilitate income transfers schemes.

Existing financial assistance schemes are provided on an ad-hoc basis, with strict eligibility criteria and means-testing based on household income. About 20 percent of households in Singapore receive assistance, and as the Acting Minister for then Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), Chan Chun Sing responded to a question raised in parliament in 2011, ‘help schemes typically cover the bottom 20th percentile of households, with the flexibility to go beyond if the family's circumstances merit consideration’.

So while government assistance is meant to be last-resort support, work and employment instead are regarded as the best form of ‘welfare’ and able people are encouraged to become self-reliant and find employment. In other words, the belief is that what is best for the unemployed people is not merely offering financial support but helping them to find employment by e.g. re-training to help them get re-employed.⁸ In general, seeking employment in Singapore where unemployment rate is only 2 percent⁹ is considered comparatively easy. However, as revealed by a survey conducted in 2013 by the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Social Work Department, whilst the majority of the respondents (66.4 %) said there are jobs available for those aid recipients who want to work, 85 per cent of the respondents also said that these jobs are not paying enough for them to support a family¹⁰.

⁷ <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/limitations-having-single-poverty-line> (12/11/2013)

⁸ See e.g. Sock-Yong Phang (2007)

⁹ Ministry of Manpower, March 2014.

¹⁰ “Working poor ‘no earning enough to make ends meet’ “, Today (25/9/2013)

1.2 Poverty and public assistance

In December 2012, there were a total of 3,047 people on long-term Public Assistance, of which 1,063 were women.¹¹ The number of female-headed households on this scheme has been increasing over the years¹² and likely increase even further with the growing number of single women.

State assistance schemes identify the family as the most important welfare provider, with government support coming in only to fill the gaps. Simultaneously, single-parent families are not specifically targeted by any aid schemes and assistance available is inadequate in supporting the needs of women as sole parent. This is often compounded by the fact the divorced mothers often face difficulties in enforcing maintenance orders made either in their favour or for their children¹³.

1.3 Poverty and elderly

Also, older women are more likely to live in poverty in Singapore, stemming from increased life expectancy, higher medical costs, and inadequate healthcare and low or no retirement savings.¹⁴ While most of the older women in Singapore are dependent on their children and grandchildren for financial assistance¹⁵, women without children are in more vulnerable position and more likely to turn to public assistance for support.

As shown by the survey conducted in 2009 on “*Social Isolation, Health and Lifestyles*” by then the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS), older women are more likely to be financially dependent on their children and grandchildren, and less likely to be self-sufficient:

Sources of income of men and women above 60

Source of income	Women	Men
Income from work	12%	28%
Pension	2%	5%
CPF	1%	5%
Savings, life insurance, bonds, stock	6%	16%
Financial support from children, grandchildren	75%	43%
Income in the form of rent from self-owned property	1%	1%
Public assistance / Assistance from CDC	1%	1%
Others	2%	1%

¹¹ <http://app.msf.gov.sg/ResearchRoom/ResearchStatistics/PublicAssistancebyGender.aspx> (accessed on 27 March 2014)

¹² From 895 in 2004 to 1063 in 2012.

¹³ SCWO CEDAW Shadow Report 2011 p.44

¹⁴ The minimum mandatory Central Provident Fund (CPF) sum to ensure sufficient retirement income was increased from \$148,000 in 2013 to \$155,000 in 2014. This is worrying as already the existing minimum mandatory sum was affordable for many. For example in 2011 and in 2012, only 45% and 48.7% of CPF members that had turned 55 met the required sum.

¹⁵ According to report by Tsao Foundation (2011), 75 per cent of women aged 60 and above depend on their children for financial assistance, compared with only 43 percent of older men. http://tsaofoundation.org/doc/Profile_Of_Older_Men_-_Singapore.pdf (2011)

2. ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

2.1 Singaporean students fare well

As a country with no natural resources, Singapore has invested heavily in its human resources and education. As a result of this investment, Singapore has managed to develop a world-class education hub and excel in international rankings. Singapore students were among the top in the world in mathematics and science on the trends in International Math and Science study (TIMSS) in 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. They also came fourth in literacy in the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). In addition, in 2012, Singapore was one of the top-performing countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Survey by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Singaporean students outperformed the OECD average in mathematics, reading¹⁶ and science. At the higher education level, the National University of Singapore was ranked 29th in the world and 2nd in Asia in the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2012-2013*.

2.2 Equal access to education

In Singapore, both girls and boys, have equal access to quality education. The Singapore government has developed a number of strategies to improve access and participation at all levels, and as a result, achieved almost universal education at the primary and the secondary levels. In 2013, 66% of women had secondary or higher qualifications (males 71.8%)¹⁷ and about 90 percent of each age cohort complete at least 10 years of education. Also, Singapore has achieved a high literacy rate for women, and the literacy rate for resident females aged 15 years and above has improved from 89.7% in 2001 to 94.6% in 2013.¹⁸ Furthermore, Singapore has reached gender parity in higher education, and women are well-represented in traditionally male-dominated subjects, such as the natural, physical and mathematical science courses, architecture and building and information technology.

Singapore's education system is based on principles of meritocracy and equity, ensuring that every student is nurtured - no matter what their ability, achievement level, or financial standing. To minimise the impact of socio-economic status on achievement, Singapore has developed a system of local community councils that identify families in need and which can provide a range of support, including financial assistance. The Ministry of Education has recently enhanced its Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) to allow more students to qualify for assistance, as well as has extended the coverage of existing bursaries to help more students from the lower and middle income households cope with the cost of education.¹⁹

¹⁶ Reading is where gender differentials are notable with girls outperforming boys with a 32 point average difference.

¹⁷ Department of Statistics, Singapore http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest_data.html#18

¹⁸ Department of Statistics, Singapore http://www.singstat.gov.sg/statistics/latest_data.html#18

¹⁹ Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) was enhanced in 2012 to include students with a gross monthly household income of not more than \$2,500 (up from \$1,500 previously). These changes will allow twice as many students to qualify for FAS – from 40,000 to an estimated 80,000 students. Also, to help students from the lower and middle income households cope with the cost of education in Singapore's Institute of Technical Education (ITE), polytechnics and universities, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has increased the quantum and extended the coverage of existing bursaries to benefit Singapore

3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

3.1 Resources and Entitlements

Equality before the law is a constitutionally enshrined right of every Singapore citizen under Article 12 of the Singapore *Constitution*.

It protects against discrimination “on the ground of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment”.

The Women’s Charter gives women in Singapore ownership rights and access to property other than land. Section 51 of the Women’s Charter enables a married woman to acquire, hold and dispose of any property; be capable of rendering herself and being rendered liable in respect of tort, contract, debt or obligation; be capable of suing and being sued in her own name; be subject to bankruptcy laws and enforcement of judgments and orders in all respects as if she were a single female.

Women also have equal access to bank loans and other forms of credit, and the right to enter into legal contracts independently²⁰.

The Administration of Muslim Law Act provides that Muslim women may enter into contracts; dispose of property by will without concurrence of husband; manage and own her own wages, investments and assets. With regards to inheritance rights, male beneficiaries are favoured over female beneficiaries under the Administration of Muslim Law Act. A male relative receives a share equal to that of two females when children inherit from parents.

3.2 Women’s Economic Participation

3.2.1 Employment

Singapore has one of the highest employment rates internationally, with unemployment rate at only 2 percent in 2014. 74.3% of women in the prime-working ages of 25 to 54 were economically active in 2013, up from 74% in 2012 and notably up from 69.4% in 2009.²¹ While the female participation in labour force has risen significantly over the years, it is still lower than in many developed countries. Only 58.1% of women (75.8% men) in Singapore economically active compared to Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK with 70% and more. Singapore ranked 75th (out of 136 countries) for labour force participation on Global Gender Gap index 2013 by World Economic Forum.²²

According to a Labour Force Survey conducted by the Manpower Research and Statistics Department of the Ministry of Manpower in 2011, the most common reasons for Singaporean women’s economic inactivity are family responsibilities (47.3%), followed by schooling/attending

Citizens from two-thirds of all households in Singapore, i.e., up to the 66th percentile of household income. See <http://www.moe.gov.sg/media/press/2011/03/enhanced-bursaries-for-post-secondary-students.php>

²⁰ <http://wbl.worldbank.org/data/exploreconomies/singapore/2013>

²¹ Labour Force in Singapore, Ministry of Manpower (2013)

²² http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf

courses/training (23.1%), and poor health (18.8%). According to a more recent survey by Accenture (2013), 74% of Singaporean women said they have turned down jobs because of concerns about work-life balance.²³

Also, while women's labour force participation has increased, the traditional roles of women as homemakers and child-minders appear to persist, leading to dual pressures of family and work.²⁴ Singaporean women are more likely to drop out of the labour force after marriage and childbirth, and those women who leave the workplace do not often re-enter as full-time workers.

As in other developed countries, growing female participation in the workforce in Singapore has led to many women delaying or deciding against having children. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in Singapore stands at 1.28 in 2012, which is significantly lower than the replacement rate of 2.1. A longer pursuit of education, combined with the higher age at marriage, means that presently, Singaporean women also begin childbearing at older age²⁵. Declining birthrates and labour force needs, in turn, have prompted the Singapore government to institute various pro-family policies and incentives to encourage family formation, help families to better balance work and family, and encourage women to join the labour force. Many of these policies have focused primarily on monetary incentives either through direct handouts or through tax incentives. New measures have been introduced, such as work-life grants and funding schemes for employers, and more recently, Government-paid one-week paternity leave and shared parental leave to encourage more equalitarian child-rearing.²⁶

3.2.2 Wage and income security

In 2013, the average (mean) monthly earnings for resident full-time female employees in Singapore was S\$3,909, whereas the equivalent figure for men was S\$ 5,291. The wage gap in Singapore was 26.5% in 2011²⁷ and this was significantly higher than the OECD wage gap average of 14.8 % in 2011²⁸. The wage gap is noted to be even wider in blue-collar industries, where men earn approximately 30% more than their female colleagues, according to the Ministry of Manpower in 2011. On average, women earn only about three-quarters of what men do, an income gap that has stayed unchanged over the last 10 years.²⁹

Lower income in turn translates to women making lower Central Provident Fund (CPF) contributions – a compulsory comprehensive savings plan for working Singaporean and permanent residents to fund their retirement, healthcare and housing needs – resulting in less income security for old age and retirement. As highlighted in the *AWARE-TSAO Foundation report Beyond Youth: Women*

²³ 'Survey: 74% of women turn down jobs due to work-life balance concerns', the Straits Times (4/3/2013)

²⁴ E.g. according to the study conducted by National University of Singapore (NUS), most household chores are still done by women, and household tasks done by them tend to be less time-flexible and discretionary, while men tend to participate in tasks which are discretionary, e.g. doing repairs (Mathews, 2012).

²⁵ In 2012, the median age of female citizens at marriage was 27.4 years, while the median age of citizen mothers at first birth was 29.8 years (Department of Statistics, Singapore, 2011).

²⁶ The latest measures were introduced in 2013 as part of the Parenthood Package. The package also introduced further infant care and kindergarten subsidies to help reduce childcare cost for parents, especially those in the lower to middle income bracket.

²⁷ Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

<http://app.msf.gov.sg/ResearchRoom/ResearchStatistics/GenderWageGap.aspx> (2012).

²⁸ OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/gender/data/genderwagegap.htm> (accessed on 20/7/2014).

²⁹ 'Improving women's lot in retirement', The Straits Times (27/5/2014)

Growing Older and Poorer, **older women have the least income security, and women aged 60 and above are the most vulnerable** as they have accumulated the least CPF savings during a lifetime of unpaid care giving and homemaking, as well as irregular work histories (2005). The recent announcement that the mandatory CPF minimum sum will be increased from the previous \$148,000 to \$155,000, may prove greater difficulties for low-income earners with many struggling to meet even the existing minimum sum target. Retired housewives in particular are likely not to have enough CPF contributions to warrant a monthly pay out from CPF after they reach 'retirement age', and many of them will need to rely on their spouses' CPF savings or other family members for financial support.³⁰ In fact, the notion of a 'retirement' does not take into account the fact that full time housewives would not even have an income to begin with, let alone retirement income.

3.2.3 Sex discrimination and sexual harassment at workplace

Pregnant women in Singapore still face discrimination in the workplace and during the recruitment process. However, there have been some improvements as pregnancy-related complaints handled by the Ministry of Manpower have decreased from 126 in 2012 to 113 in 2013.³¹ Pregnancy-related complaints are expected to decrease further with the latest amendments to the Child Development Co-Savings Act in 2013 which now provides better maternity protection against retrenchment and dismissal without sufficient cause for the full term of pregnancy³².

Singapore is also no stranger to workplace sexual harassment³³, but this is expected to decrease with the newly introduced Protection from Harassment Act in 2014, which, apart from sexual harassment within and outside the workplace, covers a wide range of other forms of anti-social behavior, such as cyber harassment, bullying of children and stalking. Furthermore, the Act provides a range of self-help measures, such as Protection Orders, civil remedies and criminal sanctions to better protect people from harassment and related anti-social behaviour.

3.3 Representation in parliament, the judiciary and decision-making bodies

Despite the fact that women make up more than 44.2 percent of the workforce and are provided equal opportunities in education, women in Singapore are still not reaching the top jobs in public life fast enough.

As of June 2014, Singapore ranked 53 out of 151 countries in the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) Statistics based on its current female representation in parliament of 25.3% (with the highest female representation being in Rwanda, 63.8%)³⁴. While female representation in Parliament went up from 20.5 percent in the 2006 elections to 21.8 percent at the most recent election in May 2011, the number of women in ministerial positions remains low. Some progress, however, was made in 2013 as a few more female parliamentarians were promoted. As a result, 6 out of the 32 political office-bearers in the government are currently women with portfolios ranging from finance and transport to health, manpower and education. These promotions also doubled the number of senior women

³⁰ When already 75 per cent of women aged 60 and above depend on their children for financial assistance, compared with only 43 percent of older men (Tsao Foundation, 2011).

³¹ Fewer pregnancy-linked complaints against bosses. The Straits Times (7/4/2014)

³² Previously, the law only protected an expectant mother for the six months leading up to her due date.

³³ According to the survey study on workplace sexual harassment by Singaporean non-profit organisation, AWARE, revealed that 272 out of 500 respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment (AWARE, 2008).

³⁴ Women in national parliaments as of June 2014: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif010614.htm>

office-holders from the previous two: Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Grace Fu, and Senior Minister of State for Education and Law Indranee Rajah. Additionally, former Minister for State for Social and Family Development, Halimah Jacob, was appointed as Singapore's first women Speaker of Parliament in the same year. Singapore ranked 90th (out of 132 countries) for political empowerment on the Global Gender Gap ranking in 2012 by the World Economic Forum.

While in the Singapore Judiciary, women are well represented with female judges outnumbering men in the State Courts (52.1%)³⁵, only two out of 19 (10.5%) judges in Supreme Court are women.³⁶

Women in Singapore have comparatively low representation in boardrooms too. According to Singapore Board Diversity Report 2013 by SCWO's initiative BoardAgender and Centre for Governance, Institutions & Organisations of National University of Singapore (NUS), female representation on the boards of Singapore Exchange (SGX) listed companies increased from 7.3% in 2012 to 7.9% in 2013. While this is an improvement, the gap between Singapore and other developed countries is widening and several countries have improved at a faster rate than Singapore. For example, in the United Kingdom, 19 percent of directorships were held by women and in Australia 17.3 percent in 2013. Singapore is also lagging behind Asian economies such as Malaysia (8.7%), Hong Kong (9.4%) and China (9%).

There have been some initiatives to encourage stakeholders to take the lead and boost gender diversity in decision-making, including BoardAgender³⁷ and more recently formed, the Diversity Task Force (DTF). Formed in late 2012, the DTF was set up by Mdm Halimah Jacob during her term as Minister of State, Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), to examine the state of gender diversity on boards in Singapore, as well as its impact on corporate performance and governance.

4. REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

5. IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

5.1 Infant and maternal mortality

As noted in the Singapore Government's latest Periodic Report presented to the UN CEDAW Committee in 2011, there have been a number of initiatives to improve the healthcare system and life expectancy of Singaporeans. Women have equal access to healthcare resources with special attention paid to the healthcare needs of women. Due to the high standards of its healthcare system, Singapore has one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world with just 3 per 1,000 live births in 2013 and low maternal mortality rate of 6 per 100,00 live births, according to the World Health Organisation³⁸. In 2013, Save the Children's State of the World's Mothers report ranked Singapore as the 15th (out of 178 countries) best place in the world to be a mother.³⁹

³⁵ Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2013
(<http://app.msf.gov.sg/ResearchRoom/ResearchStatistics/JudgesbyGenderStateCourts.aspx>)

³⁶ Supreme Court, Singapore: <http://app.supremecourt.gov.sg/default.aspx?pgID=40>

³⁷ BoardAgender, launched in 2011, is as an outreach arm of SCWO's Women's Register initiative. Its main aim is to raise awareness on the economic benefits of an inclusive and gender-balanced business.

³⁸ World Health Organisation (2013): <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/sgp.pdf?ua=1>

³⁹ Save the Children (2014)

5.2 Singapore's healthcare system

Singapore's healthcare indicators are among the best in the world today, despite having *consistently spent less than 4 percent of its GDP on healthcare*. However, according to the Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, healthcare spending is going to be biggest driver in the increase in Singapore's expenditure over the next ten to 20 years, and the government's projected healthcare spending is expected to triple to S\$12 billion a year by 2020, up from projected S\$7.5 billion in 2014. Singapore is currently spending about 1.6 per cent of the GDP on healthcare, but healthcare expenditure is expected to reach around 3.5 per cent of GDP by 2016 due to ageing population and higher medical inflation.

In 2000, World Health Organisation (WHO) ranked Singapore sixth out of 191 countries in terms of overall performance its health care system, but 101st where fairness of financing was concerned⁴⁰. Healthcare financing in Singapore is highly dependent on individual income levels and out-of-pocket expenditure despite the presence of substantial government subsidies. Due to insufficient healthcare coverage and savings, many older women in Singapore are dependent on their children's medical savings to finance their own medical bills.⁴¹ The government of Singapore has, however, made a commitment to take on a greater share of national spending on healthcare, from the current one-third to about 40 per cent.⁴²

5.3 Use of contraceptives and abortion

Married women in Singapore would appear to have a fair say in decisions related to family planning⁴³, and contraceptive services are readily available through services provided by the Ministry of Health and by public and private doctors. According to the World Economic Forum 2012 report, 62 per cent of Singaporean married women use contraception.⁴⁴

Abortion in Singapore is legal, provided that the pregnancy is terminated by a registered physician acting on the request of a pregnant woman and with her written consent during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy (Abortion Act 1974). According to the statistics from the Ministry of Health, the total number abortions performed in 2012 was **10,624**, of which about 10 percent were performed on women below 20 years old. Half of the abortions were carried out by married women.

6. COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

6.1 Low but increasing HIV prevalence

Since Singapore's first HIV patient was diagnosed in 1985, the cumulative number of HIV-infected residents of Singapore has increased manifold, from 2 in 1985 to 6,229 in 2013⁴⁵. Still, the HIV epidemic in Singapore is considered to be at a "low level", according to the World Health

⁴⁰ Abeyasinghe et al (2010)

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 'Review of healthcare financing will involve fundamental shifts: Health Minister', Channel NewsAsia, (12/3/2013)

⁴³ The World Economic Forum (2012):http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2012.pdf

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Health, Singapore (2013)

Organization's comparative country classification - meaning the prevalence of HIV does not exceed 5% in any defined subpopulation.⁴⁶

HIV in Singapore is most commonly spread mostly through unprotected sexual contact, through both, heterosexual (40%) and homosexual (46%) sexual relations.⁴⁷ Of the new HIV cases, about 94% were males and 6% females in 2013.

HIV testing is available in most medical clinics, with the option for anonymous testing.⁴⁸ In 2013, 46% of the new infections were detected when testing was performed in the course of medical care provision whilst 20% of the infections were detected through voluntary HIV screening.

In Singapore, anti-retroviral drugs are not entirely subsidised, and patients can only withdraw up to \$550 /month from their Medisave accounts to pay for them. However, for many patients this is insufficient, given that a typical drug combination for HIV treatment ranges from S\$500-S600 per month (for two medications) to S\$1200-S\$1300 / month (for three medications).⁴⁹

Singapore was declared *malaria*-free in 1982 by the World Health Organization, although 126 new cases were reported in the first ten months in 2012.⁵⁰

The incidence of dengue in Singapore has increased significantly in the past years. In 2005, Singapore reported 14,000 dengue cases - then the highest number in its history, while in 2013, the number of cases exceeded 18,000. Since the beginning of the year 2014, some 12,000 cases have already been reported.⁵¹ To control dengue, the National Environment Agency (NEA) of Singapore adopts a multi-pronged approach, including preventive surveillance and control; public education and community involvement; enforcement and research.⁵²

There has been a steady rise in new tuberculosis cases in Singapore, and in 2012, 1,560 new cases were identified, up from 1,530 in the previous year.⁵³

7. ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

7.1 Clean and green city

As a small low-lying city-state, Singapore is naturally vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and accordingly, has an interest in global efforts to address the impact and potential disruptions brought about by climate change. However, as a result of sound regulations, cooperation between the private and public sectors and careful management of its natural resources, Singapore today enjoys a clean and green environment, and an air quality better than many cities in Asia.

⁴⁶ Lim, 2010

⁴⁷ Intravenous drug use was the cause only in 0.8% of the cases; No HIV infection is reported to have spread via Blood transfusion. Ministry of Health, Singapore (2013).

⁴⁸ Ministry of Health, Singapore (2012)

⁴⁹ Lim, 2010.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ National Environment Agency (Singapore) 2014.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ <http://www.ttsh.com.sg/about-us/newsroom/news/article.aspx?id=4686>

To improve the air quality further and help combat the haze that blankets Singapore from time to time due to illegal land clearing by burning in Indonesia, the Government of Singapore has recently passed a new legislation that aims to take action against errant entities found guilty of causing or contributing to resulting haze in Singapore. The new Transboundary Haze Pollution Bill introduced maximum fine of S\$2 million for a party's conduct that causes haze pollution, from fines of up to S\$100,000 for each day of pollution, but fines may go up if seen as necessary.⁵⁴

Singapore government has introduced a number of initiatives and programmes to encourage sustainable development and use of green technologies, most notably in the areas of housing, transport, clean air and sanitation. Since 2005, over 1,650 buildings in Singapore have been made environmentally friendly, and the government is set to do more. Its *Sustainable Development Blueprint* outlines a number of "green targets" for 2030 including a recycling rate of 70 percent; a 35 percent improvement in energy efficiency; a reduction of carbon emission by further developing public transport system; and a target of 80 percent of buildings to be certified green.

Furthermore, Singapore has also been actively developing and encouraging new innovative solutions to its energy, waste and water needs. Companies are encouraged to become more sustainable through schemes such as *Sustainability and Innovation Credit (SIC)* and *Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC)* that give incentives such as tax deductions and cash payouts for companies that invest in innovation and productivity improvements⁵⁵.

7.2 Water and sanitation

Access to water is universal, affordable and efficient. Singapore has adopted an innovative integrated water management approaches such as the reuse of reclaimed water, the establishment of protected areas in urban rainwater catchments and the use of estuaries as freshwater reservoirs in order to reduce the country's dependence on imported water and to keep water pricing low. Besides physical infrastructure, Singapore emphasises proper legislation and enforcement, water pricing, public education as well as research and development in its water management approach. In 2007 Singapore's water and sanitation utility, the Public Utilities Board, received the Stockholm Industry Water Award for its holistic approach to water resources management.

7.3 Sanitation for all

Singapore initiated its first UN resolution "Sanitation for All" which designates 19 November as World Toilet Day in 2013. The resolution, which was co-sponsored by more than 100 countries, and adopted in the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, urges all UN Member States, as well as the United Nations system, to accelerate progress in order to achieve the MDGs related to sanitation.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ 'Haze law passed; fines may go up if necessary', the Straits Times (6/8/2014)

⁵⁵ In 2014, the government of Singapore allocated S\$13.8 million of its annual budget for various grants and injections to organisations for the purpose of green innovation and research.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release (24/7/2013)

8. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT

8.1 To help developing countries help themselves

Singapore does not give official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries, but it helps developing countries through its technical assistance programmes. This is unlike most other developed countries that have dedicated international development agencies and have committed to target an ODA contribution of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) by 2015. In 2014, Singapore allocated S\$105.01 million⁵⁷ to the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) which is one of the main means through which Singapore offers technical assistance to other countries. Since it was established in 1992, the SCP has trained over 80,000 government officials from 170 countries in the Asia Pacific, Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. Each year, it conducts some 300 courses and trains close to 7,000 government officials.⁵⁸

The focus of Singapore's development policy lies largely on training and increasing the skills of the recipient country. Training is offered in a diverse range of subjects such as public governance and administration, trade and economic development, environment and urban planning, civil aviation, land transport, port management, education, healthcare, and information and communication technology (ICT), with the primary focus in the ASEAN region.⁵⁹

Singapore also collaborates with 44 other key countries and international organisations, such as the Asian Development Bank, IMF and various UN agencies, to jointly provide technical assistance to other countries under our Third Country Training Programme (TCTP) framework.

⁵⁷ Singapore's gross national income in 2012 was 319.3 billion PPP dollars.

⁵⁸ Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP): http://www.scp.gov.sg/content/scp/about_us/introduction.html (accessed on 22/7/2014)

⁵⁹ Ibid.

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