

SINGAPORE COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S ORGANISATION (SCWO)

SINGAPORE COUNTRY REPORT

Violence against Women and the Legal Framework in Asia and the Pacific
(for submission to the NGO Commission on the Status of Women Committee , CSW)

January 2013

CREATING A SAFER SPACE



1. Background

- 1.1 This Country Report has been prepared by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisation ("SCWO"), Singapore's independent national non-governmental organization on women representing 57 women's organisations, at the request of IWRAW Asia Pacific which informed SCWO that as part of the preparations for the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women ("CSW") from 4 – 15 March 2013, a paper is being drafted by Asia Pacific Women's Watch ("APWW") as the Key Asia Pacific Document which will be submitted to the NGO CSW Committee to be incorporated into the Outcome Document of the CSW.
- 1.2 Due to time constraints imposed by the lateness of the request, we have not been able to consult our 57 member organisations on the Report. This Report is therefore based on our own research for the purposes of our Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ("CEDAW") Shadow Report 2011, which we have updated with recent developments.
- 1.3 The Report outlines positive developments as well as highlights recommendations for improvement.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography.
- 2.2 It can take place behind closed doors, on the streets, in schools and the workplace, during peace time and during conflicts and crises.
- 2.3 The United Nations ("UN") General Assembly¹ defines "violence against women" ("VAW") as *"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."*²
- 2.4 The UN 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of VAW has further noted that this violence could be perpetrated by assailants of either gender, family members and even the State itself³.
- 2.5 This Report is based on the above definition and parameters.

3. Regional or Sub Regional Conventions relating to VAW

- 3.1 In 1988, Singapore signed the Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region.
- 3.2 In 2004, Singapore became a signatory to the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers concluded this ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women at their 37th Meeting in Jakarta, June 2004. The Declaration commits ASEAN member states to implement and monitor commitments made to eliminate violence along eight areas of focus, namely:

¹ UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993)

² *Ibid* Article 1

³ *Ibid* Article 2

- (i) research;
- (ii) response mechanisms for survivors and perpetrators;
- (iii) gender mainstreaming;
- (iv) law reform;
- (v) empowerment of women;
- (vi) preventive measures;
- (vii) regional collaboration; and
- (viii) strengthening collaborations with non-profit organisations.

- 3.3 As a member of the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, (“**ACWC**”), Singapore through SCWO also participated in the ACWC Dialogue with forty other national and regional civil society organisations in the ASEAN region in a forum held in January 2012 in Manila, Philippines. The Dialogue provided a platform for the ACWC and civil society to share information and exchange views on issues of VAW and violence against children (“**VAC**”) that are of great concern in the region, and on challenges in the efforts towards the elimination of VAW and VAC.
- 3.4 Singapore is also a signatory to CEDAW (since 1995) and to date has submitted four periodic reports to the UN CEDAW Committee.
- 3.5 Our main recommendations for our 2011 CEDAW Shadow Report (more fully at ‘**ANNEX A**’) had set out the following in relation to Violence Against Women:
- 3.5.1 that, in addition to addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence, the government increase funding and support to shelters and support services for victims of domestic violence, whilst enforcing laws which assist women escaping domestic or family violence situations to stay in their homes with the perpetrator leaving instead
 - 3.5.2 that the government adopt systemic responses to address needs of children who have witnessed or experienced family violence
- 3.6 Pursuant to the above instruments/conventions, Singapore has put in place legislation which generally and specifically deal with violence against women and young girls.
- 3.7 We are also pleased to report some recent initiatives which have been introduced in line with our recommendations.

4. Specific Laws relating to Rape, Domestic Violence, Safe Houses and Care of Survivors

4.1 Rape

- 4.1.1 Rape by way of vaginal penetration is an offence under section 375 of the **Penal Code (Cap 224)**. Under section 376, sexual assault by other penetration is also an offence, although gender neutral in application.

4.2 Marital Rape

4.2.1 An exception to rape and sexual assault by other penetration is if it takes place within a marriage.

4.2.2 Under sections 375(4) and 376A(5) of the Penal Code, a husband who forces his wife (not being less than 13 years of age) to have sex with him is not guilty of an offence unless at the time of offence:

- His wife was living apart from him under an interim judgment of divorce or nullity not yet made absolute, under a final judgement or judicial separation or a written separation agreement or has commenced proceedings for divorce, nullity or judicial separation which are still pending; or
- There was in force an injunction restraining him from having sexual intercourse with his wife; or
- His wife has already obtained a personal protection order (PPO) or an expedited order under Section 65 or Section 66 of the Women's Charter or had commenced such proceedings which are pending.

4.2.3 On this, we note that the CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments expressed its concern at the reluctance of Singapore to criminalise marital rape and that proposed law reform recognised it as a crime within very narrowly defined circumstances.

4.3 Outraging Modesty, Sexual Harassment

4.3.1 It is noted that there is no specific legislation against sexual harassment. However, cases of molestation are covered under section 354 of the Penal Code as "assault or use of criminal force to a person with intent to outrage modesty".

4.3.2 A lesser offence of intentional harassment or harassment, alarm or distress in a public place or private place by use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or the use of writing, sign or other visible representation is also provided for under Sections 13A and 13B of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act (Cap 184), although these offences are gender neutral in application.

4.3.3 Other cases of sexual harassment which 'insult the modesty' of a woman could potentially fall under Section 509 of the Penal Code.

4.4 Offences against Women and Girls

4.4.1 Part IX of the **Women's Charter (Cap 353)** sets out specific offences in relation to prostitution, living off the earnings of prostitution and trafficking. Given the broad definition of VAW as set above, these are potential offences which are relevant to the discussion on VAW.

4.4.2 Recent amendments to the Penal Code have also included the offence of sexual grooming of a minor (section 376E) and extended extra-territorial jurisdiction over Singapore citizens and permanent residents who sexually exploit children in other countries (section 376C), and make organizing or promoting child sex tourism a criminal offence (section 376D).

The above offences would cover VAW both in public and private places.

4.5 Family Violence

- 4.5.1 The legal definition of `family violence' is found in section 64 of the Women's Charter as "wilfully or knowingly placing, or attempting to place, a family member in fear of hurt; causing hurt; wrongful confinement or restraint against the family member's will; continual harassment which causes anguish."
- 4.5.2 This definition resulted from amendments in 1996 to give greater protection to family members against violence by widening definitions of family violence to include emotional & psychological harm, and to extend the definition of family members beyond spouses and children to "spouse or ex-spouse; child, including an adopted child or stepchild; parent; in-law; sibling." The definition does not extend the remedies to unmarried co-habitees who are in a long-term relationship.
- 4.5.3 The amendments also enabled the Court to issue a Personal Protection Order (PPO) on a "balance of probability" instead of "beyond reasonable doubt". An expedited order is a temporary protection order, and may be granted under section 66 of the Women's Charter where the Court is satisfied that there is imminent danger of family violence being committed. The Court can also issue a Domestic Exclusion Order against the perpetrator to exclude him/her from the home or part of the home in serious cases.
- 4.5.4 In addition, section 65(5)(b) gives jurisdiction to the Court to mandate perpetrators, victims and other family members (including children) to attend counselling. The Mandatory Counselling Order is often issued with a PPO and aims to stop physical, emotional or verbal abuse in the family by helping the perpetrator find other ways of dealing with stress, anger or conflict without resorting to violence. Over 11,000 persons have undergone mandatory counselling since it started in 1997.

4.6 Safe Houses / Care of Survivors

- 4.6.1 Several initiatives are in place to manage family violence cases in what is termed the "Many Helping Hands Approach". At the policy level, the Family Violence Dialogue Group facilitates work processes amongst the agencies so as to strengthen services and programmes for family violence. It also monitors and identifies new trends in family violence and co-ordinates public education efforts. At the operational level, the National Family Violence Networking System links various service providers in a web of assistance for victims and perpetrators of family violence. Besides MCDS, the key partners of the network are the Police, the Prisons Department, the Family and Juvenile Court, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, National Council of Social Service, hospitals and social service agencies which include Family Service Centres, Crisis Shelters and some Sheltered Homes (see Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore).
- 4.6.1 There are currently four crisis shelters in Singapore⁴. They provide interim accommodation for women and their children who are victims of family violence, with funding from the government. All the residents are primarily referred by the Family Court, the Police, Hospitals, and Family Service Centres. Apart from providing meals and lodging, the shelters also provide counseling, and case management.

⁴ Star Shelter, Singapore Anglican Community Services Family Care Centre, Good Shepherd Centre, Casa Raudha

- 4.6.2 SCWO runs the only secular shelter in Singapore, the Star Shelter, for victims of domestic violence and homelessness. Besides providing a safe temporary refuge for women and their children, the Star Shelter also empowers the victims to manage and take responsibility for their lives, and assist them in rebuilding their lives free from violence.
- 4.6.3 The shelter can accommodate up to 28 women and children at one time. On average, 120 women and children are referred to the shelter per year. Since its inception in 1999, Star Shelter has assisted approximately 2,000 women and children.
- 4.6.4 The Singapore Government works closely with the organisations which run crisis shelters to ensure that services to victims are adequate and relevant. Full funding is provided on a per capita basis for all victims referred to the shelters and is co-shared by the government and the community.

4.7 Specialised Social Service Agencies

- 4.7.1 The Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe) and TRANS Safe Centre are two social service agencies which specialise in family violence work. Their primary goals are to end family violence and provide alternatives to violent behaviour and to strengthen family relationships.
- 4.7.2 They provide a wide range of services including:
- (i) preventive programmes for families and children
 - (ii) remedial (casework and counselling) interventions, training programmes for professionals, research and evaluation.
 - (iii) facilities for application of PPOs through video-conferencing,
 - (iv) medical services,
 - (v) legal advice
 - (vi) casework management
 - (vii) counselling services

4.8 Housing Assistance

- 4.8.1 The Housing Development Board (“HDB”) runs a Public Rental Scheme and lets out 1- and 2-room flats to poor and needy citizen households who cannot afford to buy flats, have no other housing options and no family support. As the rental flats are limited and very heavily subsidised by the Government, applicants are required to meet a set of eligibility criteria in order to qualify.
- 4.8.2 Notwithstanding this, HDB does consider allowing certain cases which cannot fully meet the eligibility criteria but with extenuating circumstances, to apply for rental flats, on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.8.3 For example, in a case where the divorce has not yet taken place, but because of proven violence by the other party, HDB could allow the spouse and children to enter rental housing first, without the inclusion of the other party in the application, which is normally required. The spouse then submits the divorce documents at later date when the proceedings are completed. In some instances, HDB might offer

interim rental housing, at below market rates, to help tide them over their temporary hardship while they work out their longer-term solutions. As at 2012, HDB had about 45,000 1- and 2-room rental flats in Singapore, with a good geographical spread.

5. Specific Initiatives / Support Services relating to VAW

5.1 Guidelines/ Resources ⁵

In addition to specific laws, Singapore has also put in place industry-specific guidelines/resources to ensure law enforcement agencies are equipped to deal with VAW issues as follows:

- (i) Manual on the “Integrated Management of Family Violence Cases in Singapore (2009)
- (ii) Booklet for Singapore Police Force on shelters for victims of family violence (2010)
- (iii) Standard Operating Procedure for the “Handling of Incidents Involving Molest/Child Abuse of School Pupils” (2012)
- (iv) Prison Regulations preventing violence against women (2012)
- (v) Guidelines for the Singapore Police Force on managing and investigating sexual crimes against women (2012)
- (vi) Guidelines for the Singapore Police Force Investigation Officers on the handling of family violence cases (2012)
- (vii) Guidelines for prosecutors in cases involving sexual offenders (2012)

5.2 Training

- (i) Training of social workers and counsellors on family violence (1997)
- (ii) Educational initiatives undertaken to prevent violence (2007-2008)
- (iii) Training of prosecutors on handling sexual violence cases (2009)
- (iv) Training of general practitioners on family violence (2010-2011)
- (v) White Ribbon Campaign (2012)
- (vi) Training of police officers on handling human trafficking cases (2012)
- (vii) Training of police officers on handling family violence cases (2012)
- (viii) Training of peacekeepers or troops on overseas missions (2012)
- (ix) Training of police officers on handling human trafficking cases (2012)
- (x) Training of officers in the Specialised Sexual Crimes Branch (2012)

⁵ The UN Secretary-General’s Database on Violence Against Women, Singapore Country Pages

- (xi) Training of officers from the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority (2012)
- (xii) Training of educational officers on sexual exploitation and abuse (2012)

6. Current situation of VAG

6.1 Statistics available at the sub-regional level

6.1.1 We are only able to address this issue at a country level.

6.1.2 Our research has unearthed the following research papers, some of which contain statistics:

(i) Domestic violence:

- Child Abuse: Protecting Children in Singapore (2005) by Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports. Statistics are not gender desegregated
- Child Abuse Investigations: Statistics are not gender desegregated
- Protecting Families from Violence: The Singapore Experience (2009) by the Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports. Statistics are not gender desegregated

(ii) Violence Against Women

- Medical Assistance Sought in Violence Cases (2004- 2009)
- Police Data on Cases of Violence against Women⁶
- International VAW Survey: The Singapore Report (2010) (“IVAWS”)

6.1.3 The IVAWS is a collaboration between the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Society against Family Violence (SAFV), the latter being an affiliate of SCWO.

6.1.4 The preliminary findings released in Jan 2010 showed that the rate of lifetime violence was the lowest (9.2 per cent) compared to the other participating countries including Australia, Hong Kong, Italy, the Philippines and Switzerland.

6.1.5 Singapore also had the lowest rate of lifetime physical violence victimisation (6.8 per cent) and the lowest rate of sexual violence victimisation (4.2 per cent) compared to the other participating countries. The researchers are working on the final report.

⁶ http://www.spf.gov.sg/stats/stats2011_intro.htm which reported ‘In recent years, Police have highlighted unlicensed moneylending (UML) and harassment; outrage of modesty (OM); and youth involvement in crime as the key crime concerns. These crimes have registered notable improvement in the year 2011’.

6.2 From the IVAWS,

6.2.1 The most common form of physical violence in Singapore was assault:

- a. Being threatened with hurt physically
- b. Being pushed or grabbed, having arm twisted or hair pulled
- c. Being slapped, kicked, bitten or hit with the fist

6.2.2 The most common form of sexual violence was non-consensual sexual contact

6.3 Military conflicts or social revolutions have taken place at the sub-regional / country level and have these impacted on increasing /decreasing VAW?

Not applicable to Singapore.

6.4 Context / situation with regard to VAW

6.4.1 From the preliminary findings of the IVAWS, of a total of 2006 women aged between 18 to 69 years surveyed

- a. **9.2 %** had experienced violence;
- b. **6.8 %** had experienced physical violence;
- c. **4.2%** had experienced sexual violence victimisation.

6.4.2 Of those who had experienced violence, **58.8%** had been subject to repeated victimisation. The survey also showed that 71.7% of those women abused by their partners were not likely to report to the police. The most common reasons for not reporting to the police:

- a. Dealt with it myself / involved a friend or family member;
- b. Too minor / not serious enough; and
- c. Did not want anyone to know.

6.5 Laws / policies that have been most effective

6.5.1 Although we were not able to find studies showing a co-relation between laws and policies and their effectiveness, we would suggest that stronger criminal sanctions against potential perpetrators will have a strong deterrent effect.

6.5.2 As for domestic violence, strengthening the law's treatment of the same and training law enforcement officers in how they handle such complaints would

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encourage positive reporting as well as signal society's condemnation of such behaviour.

6.6 Policies in place that address health aspects of gender-based violence

6.6.1 Gender-Based Violence (“**GBV**”) occurs as a cause and consequence of gender inequities. It includes a range of violent acts mainly committed by males against females, within the context of women and girls subordinate status in society, and often serves to retain this unequal balance⁷.

6.6.2 GBV includes, but is not limited to:

- (i) Domestic Violence by an intra family member and Intimate Partner Violence including physical, sexual or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse;
- (ii) Sexual Violence including rape, sexual abuse, forced pregnancies and prostitution;
- (iii) Human Trafficking
- (iv) Traditional harmful practices including female genital mutilation, honour killing and dowry-related violence.

6.6.3 Studies have shown that the often severe and long lasting impact of GBV on human health include, but not limited to: (i) fatal outcomes; (ii) acute and chronic physical injuries and disabilities, (iii) serious mental health problems and behavioural deviations increasing the risk of subsequent victimization and (iii) gynaecological disorders, unwanted pregnancies, obstetric complications and HIV/AIDS.

6.6.4 GBV not only brings about serious consequences, not only for the person who experiences it, but also those who witness it, in particular children. Victims of GBV often have severe feelings of guilt and are stigmatized and blamed by family, friends, and society.

6.6.5 The SCWO CEDAW Shadow Report therefore highlighted this issue specifically relating to children.

6.6.6 GBV undermines the dignity, autonomy and security of the victims; and the overall social and economic development of the entire society, hereby often re-enforcing gender in-equalities.

6.6.7 The type of policies which would address the health aspects of VAW would include

- (i) Primary prevention; e.g. promote community awareness and prevent GBV.
- (ii) Secondary prevention; e.g., early identification, confidentiality, monitoring and respectful treatment of survivors addressing physical, mental and reproductive health care needs.
- (iii) Tertiary prevention; e.g. more long-term counseling, mental health care & rehabilitation.

⁷ The World Bank – Gender-based violence, Health and the Role of the Health Sector

(iv) Referral to social, economic and legal support.

6.6.8 We are happy to report that the strategies which have been put in place in Singapore have not only dealt with the primary physical health consequences but also address the emotional and mental health and self-esteem issues of the victims by providing them with counselling, in some cases mandatory counselling as well as social, economic and legal support.

7. Femicide / Domestic Violence / Dowry Deaths / Female Infanticide / Acid throwing / Other extreme forms of violence against women

7.1 Most extreme forms of VAW

7.1.1 The above would constitute offences under the Penal Code under generic offences of causing hurt or causing grievous hurt, culpable homicide amounting to murder or culpable homicide simpliciter, but do not form distinct offences.

7.1.2 With the exception of domestic violence which is still prevalent, there are rarely any reported cases of other forms of extreme violence as set out above.

7.2 As for domestic violence, the following results from a study conducted by the Subordinate Courts conducted a study on the profile of family violence cases between 2003 and 2004.

7.2.1 The findings showed that **82%** of all complainants were female.

7.2.2 The study also showed that the predominant type of violence reported is spousal violence, forming **69%** of all family violence cases.

7.2.3 **17%** of victims were children; **5%** were parents and **3%** were siblings.

7.2.4 Looking at incidents, the most common form of violence was physical assault (**42%**), followed by multiple forms of violence (**26%**) and threats (**18%**).

7.3 Another disturbing trend which has emerged in recent years relates to violent behaviour by employers towards their foreign domestic helpers, who are invariably female. This has come to be known in common parlance as “maid abuse”⁸. Although the Ministry of Manpower statistics from 1997 to 2008 show a decline from 157 to 53 substantiated cases, this has become a subset of VAW within the employment context given the high reliance on foreign domestic workers in Singapore.

7.4 Direct Causes of VAW

7.4.1 Our research could not point to any one direct cause for VAW in Singapore.

7.5 Noted increase or decrease in the incidence of VAW

7.5.1 The statistics vary depending on the offences.

(i) The Singapore Government’s 4th Periodic Report to the CEDAW Committee cited an increase in rape statistics.

7.5.2 The Singapore Police Force statistics for outraging of modesty showed a decline

⁸ <http://twc2.org.sg/2011/11/16/fact-sheet-foreign-domestic-workers-in-singapore-complaints-and-abuses/>

7.5.3 Maid abuse cases was shown to be on a decline

7.5.4 There has been a general decline on the number of applications for PPOs since 2001, falling 4.4% between 2001 and 2008⁹.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Violence against women and girls has far-reaching consequences, harming families and communities. Gender-based violence not only violates human rights, but also hampers productivity, reduces human capital and undermines economic growth.

8.2 As stated in the UN Secretary-General's Special Report 'In –Depth study of All Forms of Violence against Women' (2006):

“Violence against women is complex and diverse in its manifestations. This very diversity demonstrates that it is not immutable or inevitable. The enabling conditions for violence against women are socially produced and therefore the processes by which they are produced can be altered. With the necessary political will and resources dedicated to eradicating it and to ensuring that women can enjoy all their human rights, violence against women can be seriously reduced and eventually eliminated. Securing gender equality and ending violence against women must not be treated as optional or marginal tasks. A coordinated, cross-cutting and multisectoral response is required to address violence against women. Strong institutional mechanisms at local, national, regional and international levels are needed to ensure action, coordination, monitoring and accountability”

8.3 Comparatively, against countries in the region, Singapore has made considerable progress in addressing violence against women and girls. In addition to introducing comprehensive legislation and wider domestic violence laws, Singapore has also instituted national plans of action against trafficking. Although marital rape has now been recognised as a prosecutable offence in certain circumstances, the provision does not go far enough and more lobbying needs to be done in this respect

While VAW is universal and present in every society and culture, it takes different forms and is experienced differently. The forms of violence to which women are subjected and the ways in which they experience this violence are often shaped by the intersection of gender with other factors such as culture, race, religion, ethnicity, class, age, disability, nationality and legal status, Therefore diverse strategies that take these intersecting factors into account are required in order to eradicate violence against all women. To some extent, some of successful outcomes for Singapore have been as a result of such a multi-pronged approach.

Malathi Das

Chair, Advocacy and Research Committee

SCWO

⁹ A/P Goh Lee Gan, 'The Singapore Strategy in Managing Family Violence' at http://www.cfps.org.sg/sfp/37/371/371-unit_1.pdf

ANNEX `A`

CEDAW Committee consideration of the issue

Marital rape

1. *The CEDAW Committee in its Concluding Comments expressed its concern at the reluctance of Singapore to criminalise marital rape and that proposed law reform recognised it as a crime within very narrowly defined circumstances.*
2. *The CEDAW Committee in its List of Questions also wanted information o measures taken to ensure effective implementation of the above legislation, including the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions as well as the nature of protection provided to the victims.*

Data collection in violence against women

3. *The CEDAW Committee in its List of Questions wanted information on what data was collected on the incidence of violence against women, including domestic violence and sexual violence and what trends they reveal.*

Positive Developments

5.1. Amendment to the Penal Code to introduce Anti-sexual grooming laws

1. In 2008, the Penal Code was amended to include laws against sexual grooming, recognizing newer trends in the exploitation of children including young girls¹⁰.
2. In 2010, the local newspaper reported the conviction of a 25-year old man who had who repeatedly plied a 13-year-old girl with requests for sex, as the first person to be convicted for sexual grooming.

5.2. Integrated approach to family violence

3. The Singapore Government has undertaken significant work ¹¹ to reduce violence against women. Some of the most significant achievements include:
 - the development of a multi-agency strategy to reduce violence against women;
 - significant work by the Singapore Police Force to improve the way they deal with violence against women, including practices which are consistently improved, such as the development of a Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence;
 - significant changes to the law in relation violence against women, including the definition to include harassment and the wider definition of family member for both victim and perpetrator.
4. The Singapore experience highlights that it is the combined effect of initiatives across all sectors (law reform, courts, policing, human services, offender programmes, housing, education, prevention) that makes a significant difference in relation to reducing family violence and sexual assault. Consistent messages need to be given across all areas. In addition, coordination between ministers, government departments and community organisations and services has been a critical component of the changes.

Recommendations proposed for Concluding Comments

¹⁰ Section 376E, Penal Code (Cap 224): http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/non_version/cgi-bin/cgi_retrieve.pl?actno=REVED-224

¹¹ 2009, The Singapore Strategy in Managing Family Violence: http://www.cfps.org.sg/sfp/37/371/371-unit_1.pdf

⇒ THAT the Singapore Government's work in the area of violence against women be welcomed and commended.

Challenges to Implementation

5.3. Housing and family violence

5. Due to the limited size of Singapore and a large percentage of Singaporeans living in public housing, the level of government resources provided remains inadequate to meet the challenges posed by housing issues resulting from violence.
6. Despite the large number of women escaping domestic or family violence who are assisted, only the needs of a small proportion of women in need are met by temporary housing refuges and shelter. Many are turned away because of a lack of capacity and resources, with women and children the most likely to be rejected.
7. In particular, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (such as foreign wives), women with disability and older women are not appropriately supported in the majority of refuges. Where housing does exist, it is generally emergency accommodation, rather than long-term housing solutions. This is compounded by the lack of a systemic programme to meet the needs of children who enter refuge with their mothers or have lived with family violence.
8. In addition, the primary government response to family violence requires both victim and perpetrator to remain in their homes, rather than be supported to stay in their homes with the perpetrator leaving. While legislative provisions exist for the perpetrator of family violence to leave, in practice many of these measures are not implemented.

Recommendations proposed for Concluding Comments

- ⇒ THAT, in addition to addressing the underlying causes of domestic or family violence, the Singapore Government increase funding to shelters and support services that are appropriate to women fleeing situations of domestic or family violence, whilst enforcing laws which assist women escaping domestic or family violence to stay in their homes with the perpetrator leaving.
- ⇒ THAT the Singapore government adopt systemic responses to address needs of children who have lived with family violence.

5.4. White Ribbon Campaign

9. The White Ribbon Campaign aims to engage men and boys in ending violence against women through a range of innovative strategies. The Campaign initially focused on encouraging men to pledge that they would not 'commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women' and to wear white ribbons on November 25. The White Ribbon Campaign now has a significant national profile and is recognised internationally for its leadership in engaging men and boys in preventing violence against women. In 2007, fifty-nine organisations have partnered the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) in the White Ribbon Campaign, which champions zero tolerance for violence against women. Supporters took part in a brisk walk and mass exercise to commemorate the event. This was Singapore's 5th White Ribbon Campaign, led by the newly created Male Chapter of AWARE.