



# WHITE PAPER ON SINGAPORE WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Towards a fairer and more inclusive society

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# Timeline of Key Milestones in Singapore Women's Development

**1959**



Women voted in full force and five women entered Legislative Assembly

**1960**



Free primary education provided for all children irrespective of sex, race, and religion

**1961**



Women's Charter enacted, equalising the legal status of men and women in marriage

**1978**



First Family Service Centre established to support families in need

**1968**



Employment Act enacted with protections to enhance fairness at the workplace

**1964**



Maternal and child health clinics established nationwide

**1980**



Singapore Council of Women's Organisations established

**1994**



Justice Lai Siu Chiu appointed as first female Supreme Court Judge

**1995**



Singapore acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

**2000**



Centre for Fathering established to promote active fathering



Compulsory Education Act enacted to make primary school education compulsory for all Singapore citizen children residing in Singapore

**1996**



National Family Violence Networking System established to better support families affected by violence

KEY MILESTONES

**2001**



Marriage and Parenthood Package launched to support Singaporeans in starting and raising families, and progressively enhanced over the years

**2007**



Tripartite Workgroup on Enhancing Employment Choices formed to help women enter or remain in the workforce



Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices introduced to promote fair, merit-based treatment at the workplace

**2013**



Early Childhood Development Agency established to raise the accessibility, affordability and quality of preschools

**2011**



Women's Charter amended to strengthen enforcement of maintenance orders

**2009**



Mrs Lim Hwee Hua appointed as first female Minister in Cabinet, as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Finance and Transport

**2014**



Diversity Action Committee formed to promote women's representation on boards; later reconstituted into Council for Board Diversity in 2019

**2016**



KidSTART introduced to provide upstream support for children from low-income families

**2017**



Madam Halimah Yacob sworn-in as the first female President of the Republic of Singapore, four years after being sworn-in as the first female Speaker of Parliament in 2013

**2020**



Conversations on Singapore Women's Development launched

**2019**



Penal Code amended to increase penalties for perpetrators and tackle technology-facilitated sexual offences  
Protection from Harassment Act amended to enhance protection of victims



Caregiver Support Action Plan launched to strengthen support for caregivers of seniors

**2021**



Year of Celebrating SG Women

**2022**



Women's Charter amended to introduce Divorce by Mutual Agreement



White Paper on Singapore Women's Development



# Executive Summary

The White Paper on Singapore Women's Development reflects the shared vision of Singaporeans, and outlines concrete actions we are prepared to take collectively, **towards a fairer and more inclusive society, where men and women partner each other as equals, and both can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest.**

## Progress Over the Years

**T**he Government is committed to building a society where all Singaporeans have full and equal opportunities to flourish and achieve their aspirations.

From the very start, the Government regarded Singapore women as the equal half of our society. This was despite the patriarchal norms that existed during the early years of nation-building. Since Singapore attained self-government in 1959, the Government has worked tirelessly to support Singapore women and this is seen as women have progressed significantly over three generations and their standing in society has risen steadily. Men and women enjoy most of the same opportunities today.

Singapore women have played a crucial role in society from the moment Singaporeans took our destiny into our hands. The 1959 Legislative Assembly election was a watershed moment, where

women voted in full force and five women were elected to the legislature. The new Government fulfilled its commitment to uplift women, moving swiftly to pass **the landmark Women's Charter in 1961, which institutionalised the equal standing of men and women in marriage and ensured the welfare and protection of women in Singapore.** The Government also provided equal educational opportunities for boys and girls, made improvements in healthcare services and workplace protections for women, and enhanced support for vulnerable women and families in need.

Today, men and women have comparable educational outcomes and achievements. More women have entered the workforce, assumed leadership positions and risen to the highest levels in public service, the corporate world, academia and society. Their invaluable contributions have propelled Singapore to greater heights.

We have been working hard to change societal norms about the relationship between men and

women, from one based primarily on patriarchal values to one based more on respect and partnership. This remains a conscious and ongoing effort, even as we have seen some positive mindset shifts over the years. At home, men are assuming more household and caregiving responsibilities. At work, more women have entered traditionally male-dominated sectors such as in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), with many becoming leaders in their chosen fields. Our children can look up to both male and female role models and pursue their aspirations in any field.

### **Towards a Fairer and More Inclusive Society**

This White Paper is the product of the first whole-of-society review of Singapore women's development. The Government launched the year-long, nationwide Conversations on Singapore Women's Development in September 2020 to hear Singaporeans' views on this fundamental issue and chart the way forward. 2021 was also dedicated as the Year of Celebrating SG Women. 160 conversations were held, involving nearly 6,000 Singaporeans from various walks of life. The Conversations took stock of current efforts to uplift women and gave voice to our collective aspirations for Singapore women. The strong response reflects the interest that Singaporeans have in women's development and their desire to play a part in building a fairer and more inclusive society.

Despite our achievements and progress, there are still areas where women face barriers and challenges.

Through the Conversations, stakeholders have shared the view that despite our achievements and progress, there are still areas where women face barriers and challenges. At work, some women continue to face glass ceilings and obstacles due to stereotypes. COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on persistent discrepancies in gender roles at home,

with women shouldering a disproportionately higher load. While incidents of violence and harm against women are less common in society at large, a single incident is still one too many. For Singapore to become an even fairer and more inclusive society, we must continue to evolve our mindsets on gender roles and address the practical challenges that women face. Both women and men should have real choices to pursue different aspirations at various stages of life, without feeling like they must adhere to gender stereotypes or 'have it all' to be fulfilled.

For Singapore to become an even fairer and more inclusive society, we must continue to evolve our mindsets on gender roles and address the practical challenges that women face.

### **Our Plans for Action**

The White Paper sets out 25 collective action plans by the Government and the community in five main areas, informed by the insights gained from the Conversations. These action plans reflect the whole-of-society effort required to advance Singapore women's development. They aim to support the diverse aspirations of and challenges faced by Singapore women at different life-stages, centring around our shared values of fairness, equality, respect and solidarity.

## AREA 1

# Equal Opportunities in the Workplace

Our workplaces must reflect our societal values of fairness, inclusivity and progressivity. We have made significant progress in providing equal opportunities in the workplace, and the employment rate of women between the ages of 25 – 64 years increased from 53% in 1994 to 75% in 2021. More women have taken on leadership roles, with 13.1% of Singapore companies in 2021 helmed by a female chief executive

officer according to a recent Deloitte report, the highest share globally. Nevertheless, women still face disadvantages. We will also strengthen our laws to address unfair employment practices, and work with our tripartite partners to avoid the litigious workplace culture observed in some countries which has not helped their societies progress or remain inclusive.

### ACTION PLANS AT A GLANCE:

#### STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE FAIRNESS

**Action 1:** Introduce new workplace fairness legislation

- *Enshrine the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices in law*
- *Require employers to put in place grievance handling procedures*
- *Protect confidentiality of the identity of persons who report workplace discrimination or harassment*
- *Prohibit retaliation against employees who come forward to report*

#### ENABLE MORE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY IN THE WORKPLACE

**Action 2:** Entrench Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) as a workplace norm

- *Introduce new Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs by 2024 to require employers to consider FWA requests fairly and properly*
- *Boost voluntary adoption of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs to cover 40% of all employees by end-2022*

**Action 3:** Develop career mentorship, networking opportunities and training programmes for women at work and re-entering the workforce

**Action 4:** Encourage greater utilisation of parental leave entitlements

#### FACILITATE GREATER WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

**Action 5:** Revised Singapore Exchange Listing Rules and Practice Guidance to the Code of Corporate Governance to support greater board diversity, including gender diversity

**Action 6:** Increase women's representation on boards with efforts led by the Council for Board Diversity

#### Strengthen workplace fairness

We strongly oppose unfair employment practices and discrimination of all forms – including against women. The Government is taking a significant step by **enshrining the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (TGFEF) in law**. We will

also help those who have experienced workplace discrimination or harassment to come forward. This will benefit future generations of workers as more positive norms are established.

The law will protect the confidentiality of those who come forward and protect them from retaliation,



## Our workplaces must reflect our societal values of fairness, inclusivity and progressivity.

and require workplaces to put in place grievance handling processes. By providing a fair and safe environment to report discrimination or harassment, more individuals would be assured when stepping forward to make a report.

At the same time, legislation is not a panacea. It is still preferable for cases to be resolved through mediation where possible. This preserves the relationship between the employer and employee so that they can continue to work together harmoniously.

### Enable more women to participate more fully in the workplace

We will do more to better support more women to enter, return to, remain and progress in the workforce. We will expand the availability of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) further, to enable both women and men to better balance their work, family and personal responsibilities. Together with tripartite partners, we have been educating and supporting employers in providing FWAs, with good outcomes. More employers have come to appreciate the importance of FWAs as a talent attraction and retention tool, making FWAs more available. Among employees aged 25 – 64 who required FWAs, 9 in 10 had access to the FWAs that they required in 2020, up from 6 in 10 in 2014.

As FWAs become increasingly accepted, it is timely to sustain FWAs as a pervasive workplace practice, by **introducing a new set of Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs by 2024. These Tripartite Guidelines will require employers to consider FWA requests from employees fairly and properly.** We aim to create a workplace norm where employees feel it is acceptable to request for FWAs, while maintaining the employers' prerogative to accept or reject requests taking into account their business needs.

This will boost the provision and use of FWAs, while preserving flexibility for employers.

We will bring more employers on board to build momentum towards the introduction of the Tripartite Guidelines by 2024. **We aim to increase the adoption of the voluntary Tripartite Standard on FWAs by employers, covering 27% of all employees currently, to 40% by end-2022.** The voluntary Tripartite Standard sets out best practices for offering and evaluating requests for FWAs. We will also continue to sustain ground-up efforts that support work-life harmony through our Work-Life Ambassadors and work with partners to encourage greater utilisation of parental leave, with the Public Service taking the lead.

Business organisations and community partners have introduced a range of programmes for women, including **career mentorship, networking opportunities, and training programmes** for women at work and re-entering the workforce. We will also augment Workforce Singapore's broad-based suite of employment facilitation programmes and services by strengthening partnerships with women's organisations to increase outreach to and support for women who face greater challenges in re-entering the workforce.

Taken together, this is a whole-of-society effort that will set the tone for a more understanding, family-friendly, and progressive workplace culture.

### Facilitate greater women's representation in leadership roles

We must also empower women to pursue their career ambitions. A more equitable representation of women in leadership positions can help to overcome existing gender stereotypes and catalyse mindset shifts. **The Singapore Exchange Listing Rules and Practice Guidance to the Code of Corporate Governance were revised to enhance board diversity, including gender diversity, in listed companies.** This is a significant move to secure listed companies' commitment to appoint more women on boards. The **Council for Board Diversity** will continue to lead efforts to increase women's representation on boards.

## AREA 2

# Recognition and Support for Caregivers

Caregivers are the cornerstones of our families and embody the values we cherish in society. They devote their time and energy to care for loved ones, bearing significant emotional and financial costs. Women often shoulder a heavier load in caring for both children and elderly parents, being at least four times more likely than men to be responsible

for housework and caregiving duties. Caregiving will become an even more significant responsibility as our society ages. While our caregivers care for children and elderly parents willingly and with love, we as a society must recognise their sacrifices and contributions and provide them sufficient support and real choices to pursue their aspirations.

### ACTION PLANS AT A GLANCE:

#### RECOGNISING CAREGIVERS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORTING THEIR EFFORTS

**Action 7:** Ease caregivers' load

- Enhance respite care options for caregivers
- Broaden the service scope of the Household Services Scheme to include basic child- and elder-minding services

**Action 8:** Reduce caregivers' financial strain and encourage care in the community

- Enhance the Home Caregiving Grant
- Further future support for caregivers
- Expanded the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund

**Action 9:** Enhance support for women and their children

- Enhance access to affordable and quality preschools
- Develop Child & Maternal Health & Well-being Strategy

#### CARING FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CAREGIVERS AS A SOCIETY

**Action 10:** Ramp up awareness of caregiver support initiatives and provide community support

- Promote Agency for Integrated Care as a one-stop resource for caregivers of seniors
- Form community-based peer support networks for caregivers

**Action 11:** Enhance support for caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs

- Alliance for Action (AfA) on self-care and mutual support for caregivers of persons with disabilities
- Enhance inclusion and support for preschool children with developmental needs and their caregivers

#### Recognising caregivers' contributions and supporting their efforts

The Government will help to ease the caregiving load of caregivers. **More affordable, available and accessible respite care options for seniors** will give caregivers more flexibility and let them take time

off for self-care and to recharge. The **Household Services Scheme** allows more households to tap on part-time household services and take some load off caregivers. The Government plans to further broaden the service scope of the Household Services Scheme to better support parents and caregivers.

While no amount of money can fully compensate for caregivers' sacrifices, some extra help to alleviate the costs of caregiving can go a long way. The Government will **enhance the Home Caregiving Grant** to recognise caregivers' contributions and further reduce the financial strain of caregiving, with more targeted support provided to lower-income families. **The Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund has also been expanded** to defray part of the costs incurred by caregivers in caring for our seniors. To better support caregivers to care for their loved ones at home instead of at nursing homes, we will enhance the care ecosystem and study the possibility of strengthening financial support for these caregivers.

To better support women and families with young children in their caregiving needs, the Government will continue to **enhance access to affordable and quality preschools** for families. It is also imperative to care for caregivers' health and well-being, especially women, and that of their children. The Government has set up an interagency taskforce to develop a **Child & Maternal Health & Well-being Strategy** to support women and their children, including giving every pregnant woman access to quality maternal care services.

### **Caring for the well-being of caregivers as a society**

We must all do our part to support and take care of our caregivers, who play an indispensable role in our families and society.

To help families better support their caregivers, the **Retirement Sum Topping-Up Scheme** tax relief cap was enhanced from \$7,000 (for both top-ups to self and loved ones) to \$8,000 from 1 January 2022. The Government will also explore ways to **further diversify top-up sources for the Matched Retirement Savings Scheme**, to help older Singaporeans, including caregivers, accumulate the Basic Retirement Sum. This will encourage more family members to contribute towards meeting caregivers' retirement needs, especially those who have sacrificed higher earnings and retirement savings.

A network of support beyond the family is also important. Employers and colleagues can contribute to a more supportive workplace, by being understanding towards those who need more flexibility to attend to caregiving commitments. This will help those with greater caregiving responsibilities to continue to do well at the workplace.

Fellow caregivers who best understand the joys and challenges of caregiving are an important source of community support. The Government will **promote the Agency for Integrated Care as a one-stop resource for caregivers of seniors**, and work with community partners to **form community-based peer support networks for caregivers**, to better connect caregivers to the support they need. The Government will also **enhance support for more caregivers**, including caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs.

Caregivers are the cornerstones of our families and embody the values we cherish in society. We must recognise their sacrifices and contributions and provide them sufficient support and real choices to pursue their aspirations.

## AREA 3

# Protection against Violence and Harm

Singapore must be a place where all are and can feel safe. The Government is committed to protecting all Singaporeans from harm. Violence or harm against women or men must not be tolerated.

### ACTION PLANS AT A GLANCE:

#### TAKING A STRONG STANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND HARM

**Action 12:** Revised sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences

- *Increased penalties for three sexual offences in the Penal Code*
- *AGC will generally object to rehabilitative sentences for adult offenders who commit sexual and hurt offences*
- *Publication of “Guide on Sentencing in Singapore” to raise understanding of the sentencing process*

**Action 13:** Enhance protection for victim-survivors of family violence

- *Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance preventive efforts for persons at risk*
- *Make it easier for victim-survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help*
- *Strengthen protection and support for victim-survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again*
- *Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation*

**Action 14:** Raise awareness and accessibility of resources for victims of online harms

- *AfA to tackle online harms, especially those targeted at women and girls*

#### REINFORCING A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND RESPECT IN SOCIETY

**Action 15:** Strengthen support and awareness of resources to address workplace harassment

- *Raise awareness of available resources for employers and avenues of help for affected employees*
- *Strengthen Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices’ (TAFEP) case management and referral partnerships*

**Action 16:** Implement a national framework to promote Safe Sport

- *Establish Unified Code for Safe Sport*
- *Establish Case Management Unit under Safe Sport Commission*
- *Launch Safe Sport mark for sports organisations*

**Action 17:** Promote values of respect and safety through education

- *Implement compulsory modules in all Institutes of Higher Learning on respect/appropriate behaviour for staff and students*
- *Continue efforts in schools to emphasise the teaching of values, cyber wellness and the importance of respecting personal boundaries both online and in-person*
- *Teach children in preschools about body safety awareness*

#### Taking a strong stance against violence and harm

While Singapore is one of the safest cities in the world, sexual and hurt offences against women still

occur and have taken on new forms, such as in the online realm. The safety of women and girls is a top priority and our laws and societal norms must reflect this.

Singapore must be a place where all are and can feel safe. The Government is committed to protecting all Singaporeans from harm. Violence or harm against women or men must not be tolerated.

Over the years, we have taken decisive measures to combat violence and harm against women in different domains and ensure fair and just outcomes in such cases. In 2019, the Penal Code was amended to address emerging harms facilitated by new technologies, such as voyeurism. We also fully repealed marital immunity for rape, provided for enhanced penalties for sexual and hurt offences when committed in the context of an intimate or close relationship, and introduced new offences to better protect minors from various forms of sexual exploitation. Most recently in 2021, we **reviewed the sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences** to ensure that the punishments reflect that such acts are deeply offensive to our fundamental values.

The home in particular should be a safe space. Unfortunately, instances of family violence still occur, and more can be done to tackle it and support victim-survivors. The Government has accepted, in principle, all the recommendations by the Taskforce on Family Violence, with a view to implement these recommendations over the next few years. These include **enhancing the family violence response framework** to ensure that victim-survivors of family violence facing immediate safety risks can get immediate help from both the Police and social service professionals, and **raising awareness through public education efforts** such as the Break the Silence campaign.

The online space also needs greater attention and intervention. The Government is working closely with partners to **close the digital safety gap to tackle online harms**, especially those targeted at women and girls.

### **Reinforcing a culture of safety and respect in society**

All of us have a part to play to reinforce a culture of safety and respect in our society, including in workplaces and the community. This includes creating a safe environment where victims need not fear being shamed for what had happened to them. No one should have to suffer alone and in silence.

Greater societal awareness of signs of violence or harm and the available resources will enable victims to seek more timely and better support. The Government will work with tripartite partners to **raise awareness on where and how employees who experience workplace harassment can seek help, and support them to come forward**. We will also work with the Police, tripartite partners, and NGOs to **strengthen case management and referral partnerships, and better guide companies to put in place proper grievance handling processes**. In the sporting world, the **Safe Sport Unified Code** provides a clear and common language to define misconduct in the sporting environment, to help our athletes take a stand against such behaviour.

Beyond responding to the threat of violence, our efforts must begin upstream to inculcate fundamental values and appropriate behaviour from a young age, to prevent acts of violence and harm in the first instance. Preschool teachers will be trained to **teach children about body safety awareness** and to tell trusted adults if they feel unsafe. In schools, students are taught how to protect themselves online and in-person and are educated on the laws that protect them against sexual abuse and harassment. Institutes of Higher Learning are implementing **compulsory modules on respect and appropriate behaviour** and will continually improve the content coverage of such modules. In workplaces, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices works closely with tripartite partners to train employers to adopt policies to prevent and manage workplace harassment.

Laws and policies that reinforce a culture of safety and respect must be coupled with everyday actions and habits by all Singaporeans. Parents play a key role in educating their children from young. Men can actively speak out against disrespect and objectification of women. We all have a role to ensure Singapore continues to be a place where men and women alike feel safe, secure, and are able to participate fully in society.

## AREA 4

### Other Support Measures for Women

We must be mindful of women who need more help owing to their circumstances. No Singaporean should be left behind. Some groups of women may be more vulnerable as they face greater financial and emotional stressors, and need more help with employment, socio-emotional support and caregiving. We must actively walk alongside them, to care for and support them.

#### ACTION PLANS AT A GLANCE:

**Action 18:** Enhance support for single parents

- *AfA to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships – Focal Area 4 on “Support for Single Parents”*

**Action 19:** Enhance support for divorcing/divorced women

- *Introduced option for couples to file for Divorce by Mutual Agreement of the Irretrievable Breakdown of the Marriage*
- *Extended Mandatory Parenting Programme to divorcing parents with minor children (who file on the simplified track)*
- *Enhance maintenance enforcement*
- *Launched online portal to support couples contemplating divorce*

**Action 20:** Enhance support for low-income families with children

- *Pilot childminding service*
- *Expand KidSTART*

**Action 21:** Provide women the choice to undergo elective egg freezing

- *Women aged 21 – 35 years, regardless of marital status, can choose to undergo elective egg freezing. Only legally married couples can use their frozen eggs for procreation*

#### Supporting women who need more help

We must care for and support women who are in vulnerable situations. This includes single mothers, those who are divorced or widowed and women from low-income families.

Under the **Alliance for Action (AfA) to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships**, the Government will work with community partners to strengthen support for single parents, the majority of whom are mothers. This includes access to information, alternative childcare arrangements,

flexible employment opportunities and socio-emotional support.

To better support those undergoing divorce, the Government has amended the Women’s Charter to introduce a **sixth fact of Divorce by Mutual Agreement of the Irretrievable Breakdown of the Marriage** to reduce acrimony in the divorce process. The Government will also **enhance programmes and policies** to help parents make informed decisions in the best interest of their children, even as they contemplate divorce. In addition, the Government is working on **enhancing**

**the maintenance enforcement process** to make it more efficient, effective, and to minimise the need for repeat enforcement.

Low-income families, including single mothers, may require alternative caregiving options beyond regular childcare and student care centre operating hours. The Government has partnered Daughters Of Tomorrow to **pilot a childminding service**, to ease such families' caregiving load and better enable them to access employment. The Government will also **expand KidSTART to more regions** to support parents from low-income families with knowledge and skills to nurture their children's early development. KidSTART will also facilitate children's enrolment into preschools.

### **Provide women the choice to undergo elective egg freezing**

The Government supports and encourages Singaporeans to pursue their marriage and parenthood aspirations as early as possible, to increase the chances of conceiving naturally and reduce the chance of age-related problems. However, we recognise that some women desire to preserve fertility because of their personal circumstances, for example, those who are not able to find a partner while they are younger, but wish to have the chance of conceiving if they marry later.

Moving forward, women aged 21 – 35 years (as aligned with the age limits for egg donation), regardless of their marital status, can choose to undergo elective egg freezing, with sufficient safeguards to ensure they make an informed choice. Only legally married couples can use their frozen eggs for procreation.

▶ We must care for and support women who are in vulnerable situations. This includes single mothers, those who are divorced or widowed and women from low-income families.

## AREA 5

### Mindset Shifts

Singapore women have achieved significant progress over the years. Today, it has become a norm that women should be equally recognised, respected, and empowered with opportunities. However, this was considered radical just a few decades before.

We would not be where we are today without the vision of and close partnership between the Government, community partners, and people over the decades. Policy and legislative changes have removed many overt obstacles in the way of women's development, enabling younger generations to pursue more opportunities than

their mothers and grandmothers. But underpinning the success of these policies are mindset shifts on gender stereotypes, which require a whole-of-society effort beyond Government policies. We must continue to change mindsets towards a fairer and more inclusive society, which will set the pace for further progress in Singapore women's development.

For our other action plans to be effective, we must continue to identify and overcome persistent stereotypes and unhelpful mindsets. Singapore can achieve much more with men and women standing as equal partners and contributors to society.

Underpinning policy and legislative changes are mindset shifts on gender stereotypes, which require a whole-of-society effort. We must continue to change mindsets towards a fairer and more inclusive society.

#### ACTION PLANS AT A GLANCE:

**Action 22:** Updated the Women's Charter to better reflect women's equal status as men in marriage

**Action 23:** Address mental models arising from societal stereotypes

- *Implement Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum to address equity of familial roles*
- *Address gender stereotypes about careers through education*
- *Work with community partners to change mindsets*

**Action 24:** Develop gender-responsive standards under the Singapore Standardisation Programme

**Action 25:** Dedicate a public garden to honour and celebrate pioneering spirit of Singapore women

#### Affirming and celebrating Singapore women

Women and men are recognised as equal and separate legal persons and are afforded the same rights today. Part VI of the Women's Charter had

previously listed the specific rights and obligations of a married woman. This was a product of historical legacy and is no longer relevant today. The Government has **amended the Women's Charter** to reflect this.



We must also inculcate the values of fairness, equality, respect and solidarity in our younger generations. The Government has enhanced the **Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum** to address mental models and stereotypes more directly, especially those that impact women in their career choices and familial roles. As a society, we can support these efforts by modelling equitable and supportive relationships between men and women for our children.

Our community partners have also been crucial in our efforts to change mindsets and overcome gender stereotypes. Their efforts and initiatives

We must inculcate the values of fairness, equality, respect and solidarity in our younger generations.

to enhance family ties, promote community bonding and equip men and women with skills and resources to fulfil their potential play a key role in realising a fairer and more inclusive society for all men and women.

Standards are important in ensuring products and processes are safe and reliable for their intended users. It is thus important for the development of standards to give equal considerations to the differing needs of men and women. Enterprise Singapore and the Singapore Standards Council will **raise awareness of and advocate for greater gender diversity in standards development to develop gender-responsive standards** under the Singapore Standardisation Programme in 2022.

To reflect the enduring importance of Singapore women's development to our society, the Government will work with the community to **design and dedicate a public garden** in the heart of the city to honour and celebrate the pioneering spirit and the contributions of Singapore women.

## LOOKING AHEAD

This White Paper encapsulates our shared vision and values and sets out action plans for the whole of society – Government, civil society, private organisations and citizens – to jointly advance Singapore women's development. We will create more opportunities in a rapidly changing world to secure a better future for ourselves and our future generations.

Underlying the White Paper and each of the action plans are the commitments we make to one another: that everyone gets a fair chance at success, can find a place for herself/himself in this nation, and that we take care of the vulnerable among us. We

will harness the momentum for our next bound of progress through the action plans set out in the White Paper. These will be implemented over the next ten years in close partnership with the community and a mid-point review will be conducted in 2027.

The Government calls on every Singaporean to overcome gender stereotypes in our everyday actions that restrict or limit what women can do or become. Together, we can make Singapore a fairer and more inclusive society for future generations of Singaporeans – women and men, girls and boys alike.

“We must continue to stress and strengthen the ethos of fairness and justice in our society where men and women partner each other as equals, progress together and pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest and where we take care of the vulnerable amongst us.”

*Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong*



# Introduction

## Singapore Women's Development: A Brief Retrospective

**M**any societies around the world have been patriarchal throughout history, and Asian societies were no exception. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, women were still not regarded as equals to men, and some societies even had laws that consigned women as property of men.

As a migrant, colonial society then, Singapore inherited a confluence of different cultures and practices from other countries. Traditional Asian patriarchal values were entrenched, family structures were varied, and polygamy was a culturally accepted practice. Women also had limited personal autonomy after marriage under the prevailing colonial laws. More than half of all women in Singapore then were illiterate and only one in five working-age women had jobs, mostly in low-wage positions.

Despite structural obstacles, women played a vital role in our nation-building efforts. In the early 1900s, many women migrated to Singapore. *Samsui* women came from southern China to look for jobs and shaped our physical landscape. Others became *amahs* or *majies* (domestic workers) who were responsible for cooking, housekeeping, or caregiving in families. Many women became pioneers in the social domain, contributing to Singapore in diverse roles such as teachers,

social workers, doctors, and nurses. In the 1940s and 1950s, women became more involved in post-war rebuilding efforts such as setting up feeding and children's centres, providing family planning services and establishing women's associations, among many others. In the Legislative Assembly, female parliamentarians such as Chan Choy Siong, Hoe Puay Choo, Sahorah Binte Ahmat and Fung Yin Ching played a crucial role in the enactment of the Women's Charter in 1961. The Women's Charter was remarkably progressive for its time and received strong support from the Government at that time, including Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye and Law Minister K. M. Byrne.

Since Independence, the Government has pushed hard for Singapore women's development in partnership with the people and private sectors, families and individuals. Our vision is to build **a fairer and more inclusive society, where men and women partner each other as equals, and both can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest.** Today, women are respected in society, well-protected under the law, have vastly improved health and education outcomes, and men and women enjoy most of the same opportunities. Singapore was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> out of 162 countries and second in Asia on the Gender Inequality Index in the UN Human Development Report 2020. A detailed historical overview of Singapore women's development is found in [Annex A](#).

Today, women are respected in society, well-protected under the law, have vastly improved health and education outcomes, and men and women enjoy most of the same opportunities.

## Conversations on Singapore Women's Development: Why Now?

Singapore women have made great strides in many areas, such as education, healthcare, and leadership in politics, business, and the community, and contributed in turn to Singapore's progress. 2021 was a significant year as we commemorated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Women's Charter. The Government also designated 2021 as the Year of Celebrating SG Women, and dedicated a new orchid hybrid *Papilionanthe SG Women*, in celebration of the continued progress, contribution and achievements of Singapore women.

While Singapore women have progressed greatly, there is room for us to do more. At work, some women continue to face glass ceilings and obstacles due to gender stereotypes. COVID-19 has also shone a spotlight on persistent discrepancies in gender roles at home, with women shouldering a disproportionate load. While incidents of violence and harm against women are less common in society at large, a single incident is still one too many.

We must persist in our efforts to change mindsets, address gender stereotypes, and ensure that all Singaporeans have full and equal opportunities to flourish and achieve their aspirations. In this spirit, the Government launched the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development in September

2020. At the launch, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law K Shanmugam said, "[Children] need to be taught from a very early age that boys and girls are to be treated equally, and very importantly, with respect. It has to be a deep mindset change." Through the conversations and written feedback from individuals and organisations, participants shared their personal stories and challenges, and their hopes and aspirations for Singapore women's development.

This White Paper builds upon the feedback and ideas received from the Conversations. The Government would like to thank participants for their enthusiasm and heartfelt feedback, and our partners for their strong support.

"[Children] need to be taught from a very early age that boys and girls are to be treated equally, and very importantly, with respect. It has to be a deep mindset change."

*K Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law*



*Launch of the new orchid hybrid Papilionanthe SG Women by President Halimah Yacob on 8 March 2021 at the Istana.*



# Engagement Process

## A Whole-of-Society Effort

In declaring 2021 as the Year of Celebrating SG Women, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli highlighted the importance of a whole-of-society effort to co-create and catalyse solutions to help further the progress of Singapore women.

The Conversations on Singapore Women's Development was launched on 20 September 2020 by Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law K Shanmugam, to hear Singaporeans' views on this fundamental issue and chart the way forward. The feedback and suggestions gathered formed the basis for this White Paper.

The Conversations are part of the Singapore Together movement and were co-led by Minister of State (Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education) Sun Xueling, Minister of State (Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and Ministry of Trade and Industry) Low Yen Ling, and Parliamentary Secretary (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Communications and Information) Rahayu Mahzam.

160 conversations were held with nearly 6,000 Singaporeans from various walks of life – men and women, young and old, homemakers, caregivers, unions, working professionals, corporate and business leaders, community organisations and more.

Government agencies and partners representing different segments of society organised many conversations to explore the wide range of issues in greater depth. The Government would especially like to thank our key partners – the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) U Women and Family and People's Association (PA) Women's Integration Network Council – and other partners for lending their strong support.

Given the COVID-19 situation, most conversations were conducted virtually. A few physical sessions were held with the necessary Safe Management Measures in place. One session even took place on wheels, where feedback was garnered from the public at East Coast Park on bicycles.

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The Conversations also provided online avenues to share feedback. A microsite was set up on REACH (<https://go.gov.sg/sgwomen>) to provide regular updates on the Conversations process and summaries of key discussion points, and to invite the public to submit further feedback. We received reports from civil society organisations, and written feedback from community partners and individuals. The Government also conducted a Survey on Women’s Development to gather additional insights on the public’s views on issues affecting Singapore women.

The Conversations were officially closed on 18 September 2021 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who acknowledged the wealth of feedback received and reiterated the importance of the Conversations in bringing together different groups with diverse experiences, to collectively imagine and work towards a better society for future generations. Prime Minister Lee said, “We must continue to stress and strengthen the ethos of fairness and justice in our society where men and women partner each other as equals, progress together and pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest and where we take care of the vulnerable amongst us.”

## CONVERSATIONS ON SINGAPORE WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

CLOSING SESSION • 18 SEPTEMBER 2021



The infographics on the following page summarise the data collection and feedback analysis process. The data was analysed to identify broad feedback areas, sub-themes and underlying connections. The insights formed the basis of the action plans set out in this White Paper. A detailed summary of the feedback received from the Conversations is found in [Annex B](#). While all feedback is heard and valued, some suggestions were not included in this White Paper as there are differing views among various segments of the public on the issues at this moment, and more time is needed to deliberate on these issues and consider the trade-offs involved.

## ▶ PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND KEY FEEDBACK THEMES

**ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS FROM VARIOUS WALKS OF LIFE, SUCH AS:**

Youths, Seniors, Women's and Men's groups, Homemakers, Caregivers, Unions, Working Professionals, Corporates and Business Leaders, Community Organisations, and more.

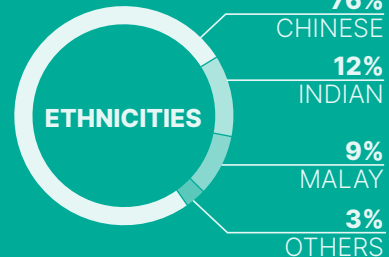
**160**   
CONVERSATIONS

NEARLY  
**6,000**  
PARTICIPANTS

**30** PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

**42%**       
YOUTHS

**20%**       
MEN



### 5 KEY THEMES FROM CONVERSATIONS:

  
MORE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN WORKPLACE

**37% OF ALL FEEDBACK**

  
BETTER SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

**21% OF ALL FEEDBACK**

  
MINDSET SHIFTS

**20% OF ALL FEEDBACK**

  
ENHANCED PROTECTION FOR WOMEN

**15% OF ALL FEEDBACK**

  
SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS OF WOMEN

**7% OF ALL FEEDBACK**

## ▶ CONVERSATIONS, FEEDBACK AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

SEP 2020 - SEP 2021

### CONVERSATIONS ON SINGAPORE WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

SEP 2021 - APR 2022

### DRAFTING OF WHITE PAPER

#### 160 CONVERSATIONS WRITTEN FEEDBACK

#### ANALYSIS OF FEEDBACK

- **Data sources:** Conversations and written feedback
- **Data analysis:** Distilled feedback into five main themes, along with the key issues within each of the themes
- **White paper:** Insights informed development of the action plans in the White Paper

#### CONSENSUS DIALOGUES

Participants discussed and validated the key themes to be addressed

#### CLOSING DIALOGUE

Prime Minister acknowledged feedback and laid out key policy focus areas

#### PRESENTATION OF WHITE PAPER ON SINGAPORE WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT TO PARLIAMENT

APR 2022 ONWARDS

### IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PLANS

#### WHITE PAPER

Lays out **action plans**, including policies and programmes to better support Singapore women

#### CO-CREATION INITIATIVES

Government will partner citizens and stakeholders to co-create solutions



# Key Areas

1

**Equal Opportunities in the Workplace**

2

**Recognition and Support for Caregivers**

3

**Protection against Violence and Harm**

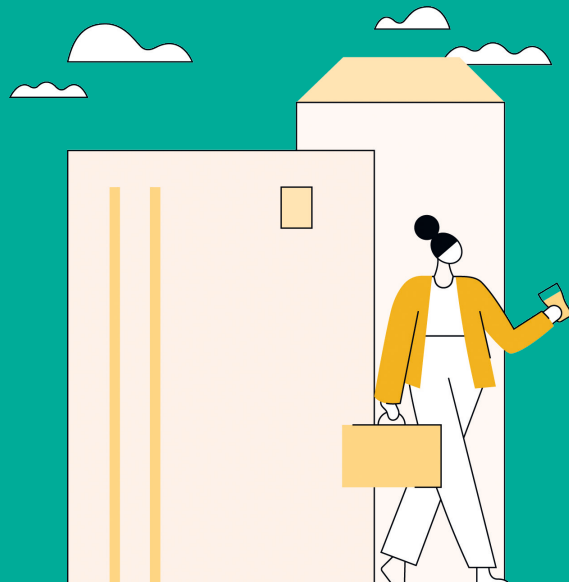
4

**Other Support Measures for Women**

5

**Mindset Shifts**

# Equal Opportunities in the Workplace





## In a Nutshell

Over the years, Singapore women have made great strides at the workplace and are leaders in many fields. Nonetheless, women still face greater barriers than men in some areas at work today. The Government will enhance support for women in the workplace by building fairer, more inclusive and progressive workplaces:



### STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE FAIRNESS

#### Action 1: Introduce new workplace fairness legislation

- Enshrine the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices in law
- Require employers to put in place grievance handling procedures
- Protect confidentiality of the identity of persons who report workplace discrimination or harassment
- Prohibit retaliation against employees who come forward to report



### ENABLE MORE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY IN THE WORKPLACE

#### Action 2: Entrench Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) as a workplace norm

- Introduce new Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs by 2024 to require employers to consider FWA requests fairly and properly
- Boost voluntary adoption of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs to cover 40% of all employees by end-2022

#### Action 3: Develop career mentorship, networking opportunities and training programmes for women at work and re-entering the workforce

#### Action 4: Encourage greater utilisation of parental leave entitlements



### FACILITATE GREATER WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

#### Action 5: Revised Singapore Exchange Listing Rules and Practice Guidance to the Code of Corporate Governance to support greater board diversity, including gender diversity

#### Action 6: Increase women's representation on boards with efforts led by the Council for Board Diversity

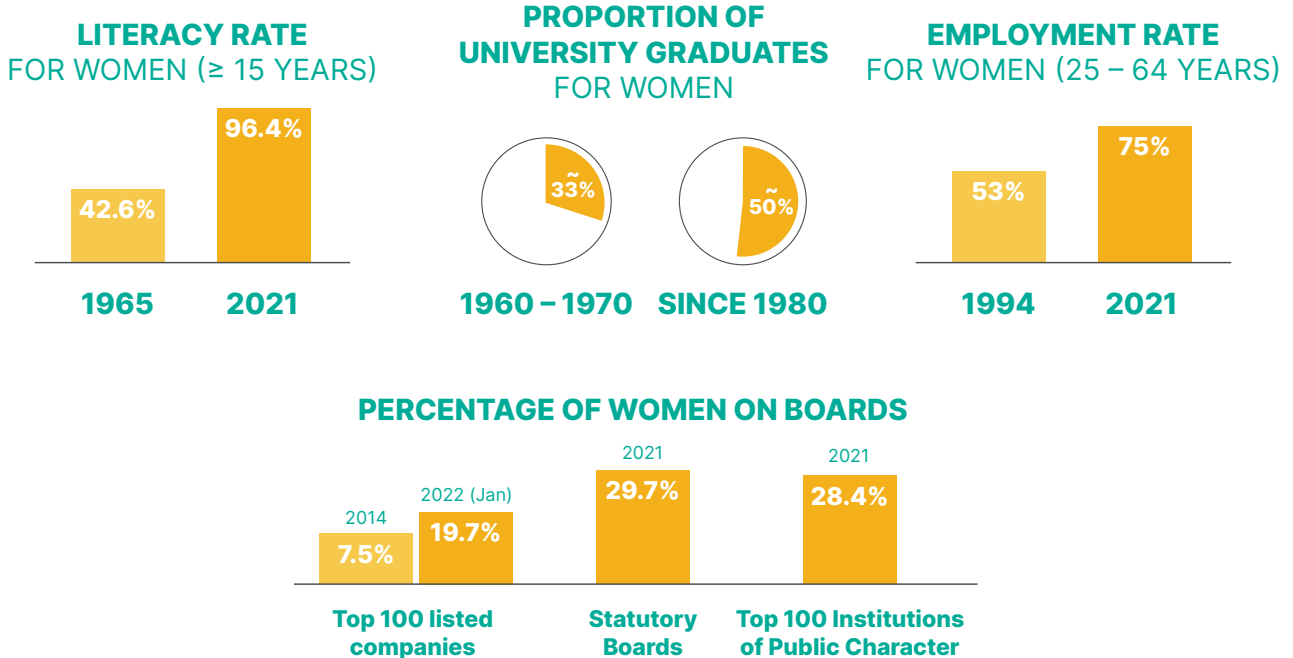
## Introduction

Our workplaces must reflect our societal values of fairness, inclusivity and progressivity, so that all Singaporeans have a fair chance at achieving their potential.

Universal education for all boys and girls since the 1960s has uplifted women who did not enjoy equal education opportunities previously. Literacy rates of women aged 15 and above increased from 42.6% in 1965 to 96.4% in 2021. The proportion of female university graduates also grew from over one-third from 1960 – 1970 to around half since 1980. Women enjoy equal rights and

protection under the Employment Act and other legislation. Efforts have also been taken to improve representation of women in leadership roles across various sectors and job levels. With these measures, the employment rate for women between the ages of 25 – 64 years increased from 53% in 1994 to 75% in 2021. The percentage of women on boards of Singapore's Top 100 listed companies increased from 7.5% in 2014 to 19.7% as at 1 January 2022, while that of Statutory Boards and the Top 100 Institutions of Public Character stand at 29.7% and 28.4% respectively as at end-December 2021.

Our workplaces must reflect our societal values of fairness, inclusivity and progressivity, so that all Singaporeans have a fair chance at achieving their potential.



Singapore compares well internationally. Our adjusted gender pay gap improved from 8.8% in 2002 to 4.3% in 2020<sup>1</sup>, lower than the US and Canada. According to a recent Deloitte report, 13.1% of companies in Singapore had female chief executive officers in 2021, the highest proportion globally and more than double the global average of 5%. Our proportion of women parliamentarians is close to 30%, comparable to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 30.1% in 2019 and higher than the Inter-Parliamentary Union average of 25.5%.

COVID-19 has severely impacted economies around the world and disproportionately affected women. A recent McKinsey report found that female job loss rates due to COVID-19 are 1.8 times higher than male job losses, potentially costing the global economy US\$1 trillion by 2030 if these regressive trends are left unaddressed.

Fortunately, Singapore’s experience has been different. We have seen minimal differences in employment impact between men and women. Our female employment rate increased from 2019 – 2021, and women were no more likely to be retrenched than men. One positive trend seen during the pandemic is the wider prevalence of flexible work arrangements (FWAs)<sup>2</sup>, which help both men and women to better manage their workplace and personal responsibilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the feasibility and benefits of implementing FWAs. The proportion of employees who were working in establishments offering at least one FWA on a regular and sustained basis increased from 65% in 2015 to 86% in 2020. Among employees aged 25 – 64 who required FWAs, 9 in 10 had access to the FWA that they required in 2020, up from 6 in 10 in 2014. In 2021, 73% of companies that offered FWAs indicated that they were likely to continue doing so post-COVID-19, and 63%

<sup>1</sup> Refers to adjusted median gender pay gap of full-time resident employees aged 25 – 54. The adjusted gender pay gap takes into account factors such as industry, occupation, usual hours worked per week, age and education, and is a better measure of whether men and women are paid equally for doing similar work. Singapore’s unadjusted median gender pay gap of full-time resident employees aged 25 – 54 also improved from 16.0% in 2002 to 14.4% in 2020.

<sup>2</sup> FWAs include flexi-place (e.g. teleworking, work-from-home, homeworking), flexi-time (e.g. staggered hours, compressed work-week), and flexi-load (e.g. job-sharing, part-time) arrangements.

indicated that they were willing to allow employees who can work from home to continue doing so at least half the time.

Nonetheless, our work is not done. As occupational segregation<sup>3</sup> is the key driver of the gender pay gap<sup>4</sup>, society's expectations about the kinds of jobs

Employers and employees, men and women, must recognise and challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace.

men and women should hold need to evolve. While most employers uphold fair employment standards, some workers still encounter discrimination or discriminatory practices.

Women should not be disadvantaged by unfounded and erroneous assumptions that they are less committed to their careers or less capable than men. Employers and employees, men and women, must recognise and challenge gender stereotypes in the workplace. Reducing the gender pay gap also requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses the barriers to women entering and progressing in their careers of choice. This includes working with employers to build supportive workplaces that help both male and female employees balance their responsibilities within and outside work.



<sup>3</sup> Where women tend to be over-represented in lower paying occupations (e.g. general office clerks), and men in higher paying ones (e.g. chief executives and general managers).

<sup>4</sup> Key finding from the occasional paper on "Singapore's Adjusted Gender Pay Gap", released by the Ministry of Manpower and National University of Singapore, published January 2020.

# Existing Efforts to Promote Equal Opportunities in the Workplace

A summary of existing efforts is below (see [Annex C](#) for more details).

## STRENGTHENING WORKPLACE FAIRNESS

### Enforcement

The Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices require employees and jobseekers to be assessed on merit and not on factors unrelated to his/her ability to perform the job, such as marital status or family responsibilities. The Employment Act also protects all employees from wrongful dismissal, including on discriminatory grounds (e.g. due to pregnancy)

### Education

As discrimination is at its root an issue of mindset, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) will continue to work closely with tripartite partners and community stakeholders to correct gender stereotypes and promote fair and progressive employment practices

## ENABLING WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION

### Flexible Work Arrangements

Today, MOM and tripartite partners take an educational and enabling approach to help employers to appreciate the importance of FWAs, and equip them with the know-how to implement them effectively. The Tripartite Advisory on FWAs provides guidance to companies on how to implement FWAs at their workplaces, including practical steps on how employees could request for and use FWAs responsibly, and how supervisors should fairly consider FWA requests and manage employees on FWAs. There are also three sets of Tripartite Standards on FWAs, Work-Life Harmony and Unpaid Leave for Unexpected Care Needs that recognise employers who voluntarily put in place recommended practices to support workers' work-life needs, including FWAs. The Alliance for Action (AfA) on Work-Life Harmony in 2021 rallied the community, employers and employees alike, to take ownership of strengthening work-life harmony through knowledge-sharing Communities of Practice and jointly developing resources to support the implementation of work-life practices at workplaces

### Leave provisions and support for greater shared parental responsibility

Working couples can take up to 22 weeks' leave in their child's first year, of which up to 8 weeks can be taken by fathers. Government, community and tripartite partners work together to promote active fatherhood and family-friendly workplaces

### Employment facilitation and training programmes

Workforce Singapore (WSG) has a broad-based suite of employment facilitation programmes such as Career Trial and Career Conversion Programmes, as well as SkillsFuture Singapore's Continuing Education and Training courses. There are additional support measures provided during COVID-19 such as the SGUnited Jobs and Skills package



## FACILITATING GREATER WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

### **Council for Board Diversity**

Promotes sustained increases in women's representation on boards by raising awareness and working with stakeholders to develop a pipeline of board-ready women

### **SGX Listing Rules**

Requires SGX-listed companies to disclose their board diversity policy and progress achieved in areas such as gender, skill and experience

### **Practice Guidance to Code of Corporate Governance**

Recommends the adoption of certain good practices by listed companies on appointment of directors to enhance board diversity

## Key Challenges and Gaps to be Addressed

### Workplace fairness

After more than a decade of actively promoting fair and progressive employment practices, standards have improved, and workplace discrimination case numbers have remained relatively low. But there remains an errant minority amongst employers, causing some workers to still be discriminated against. Feedback from the Conversations indicate that women are concerned about workplace discrimination and the perceived risks around reporting it. A more robust system needs to be put in place to uphold workplace fairness in the long term

### Representation of women in leadership roles

Potential candidates for senior management positions and board directorships tend to be drawn from a limited pool

### Change mindsets

There are entrenched stereotypes that women are the primary caregivers and men are the main breadwinners, and that certain jobs should be performed by women and others by men. Such mindsets need to change

### Support women to enter and progress in the workforce

To support women to continue working and to progress in their careers, we want to go beyond encouraging the provision of FWAs, to also encourage their utilisation. This can be done by ensuring that requests for FWAs are considered fairly and properly. At the same time, we must recognise the importance of preserving employers' flexibility in managing their workforce. The type and extent of FWAs employers can provide will still need to take into account the business needs and operating contexts of different organisations. For example, it may be challenging to offer telecommuting to staff working in some frontline positions; in such cases, other forms of FWAs could be considered. Besides access to FWAs, we will also augment WSG's broad-based suite of employment facilitation programmes and services by strengthening partnerships with women's organisations to increase outreach to and support for women who face greater challenges in re-entering the workforce

## How can we further pursue equal opportunities for women in the workplace?

The Government will enhance existing efforts to build fairer, more inclusive, and more progressive workplaces that better support women in the workforce and those looking to enter or return to the workplace.



### STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE FAIRNESS

We will continue to reduce and remove barriers that hinder women's career progress. We will counter the disadvantages that women still face compared to men, in part due to the disproportionate caregiving responsibilities placed on them, which might worsen prejudices against women in the workforce.

## ACTION 1

### Introduce new workplace fairness legislation

We will take a stronger stance against unfair employment practices of all forms, including against women, by enshrining the established Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (TGFEPP) in law.

It is overall beneficial to society for those who experience workplace discrimination or harassment to come forward, so that problems can be addressed, and positive norms established. Based on feedback garnered from the Conversations, some hesitate to seek help out of fear that in doing so, they would be disadvantaged in the workplace. Such perceptions are detrimental to fostering fair and safe workplaces, and maintaining positive employer-employee relationships. The Tripartite Committee on Workplace Fairness (TCWF) has landed on three proposals to provide more support to this group of workers, and is deliberating on the details:

- a. Require employers to set up formal grievance handling procedures, and to clearly communicate the procedures to their employees. This would better assure employees that their grievances will be managed well. Key duties include having a proper inquiry and documentation process. Guidance tailored for smaller firms will be provided to support their implementation.
- b. Protect confidentiality of the identity of persons who report workplace discrimination or harassment. Only persons who need to know the persons' identity for the purposes of grievance handling, investigation, and related proceedings (including the accused), or as required by law, should be permitted to know.
- c. Prohibit retaliation against employees who report workplace discrimination or harassment.

The TCWF is making good progress and aims to complete its work by end-2022.





## ENABLE MORE WOMEN TO PARTICIPATE MORE FULLY IN THE WORKPLACE

To better support more women to enter and progress in the workforce, the Government will encourage, guide and support companies to provide FWAs, and require employers to assess requests for FWAs fairly and properly. We will also partner with women's

organisations to increase outreach to and support for women who face greater challenges in re-entering the workforce. This will enable men and women to participate more fully in the workplace and achieve both their career and family aspirations.

To better support more women to enter and progress in the workforce, the Government will encourage, guide and support companies to provide FWAs, and require employers to assess requests for FWAs fairly and properly.

### ACTION 2

## Introduce new Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs by 2024 to require employers to consider FWA requests fairly and properly; boost adoption of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs to cover 40% of all employees by end-2022

To make FWAs a pervasive and sustainable workplace norm, while maintaining employers' prerogative to accept or reject FWA requests based on their business and operational needs, MOM will work with tripartite partners to put in place a new set of Tripartite Guidelines that will require employers to fairly and properly consider FWA requests, by 2024. The Tripartite Guidelines will prescribe fair and proper practices that employers should adopt, such as having an HR policy on FWAs, and proper processes to assess and communicate the outcome of FWA requests. This will establish the norm that FWA requests will be seriously considered by employers, notwithstanding that FWAs are not an entitlement.

When introducing the Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs, we must be mindful to preserve mutual trust and understanding between employers and employees. MOM will consult tripartite partners on the scope of the Tripartite Guidelines, and take a calibrated and enabling approach in its implementation. We will provide employers with templates, guides and training. Egregious cases will face scrutiny by MOM. MOM will also consider focusing on larger firms that have greater capacity to abide by the Tripartite Guidelines.

To build up momentum and prepare companies for the Tripartite Guidelines on FWAs, MOM and tripartite partners will boost adoption of the voluntary Tripartite Standard (TS) on FWAs, which sets out best practices for employers to offer and objectively evaluate employees' requests for FWAs. The TS on FWAs covers around 882,000 employees (~27% of all employees) today. We aim to extend coverage of the TS to 1.33 million employees (~40% of all employees) by end-2022.

MOM and tripartite partners will continue to publicise existing resources for implementing FWAs, such as workshops run by TAFEP, and tools developed by the AfA on Work-Life Harmony. We will extend outreach by growing and partnering the volunteer community of Work-Life Ambassadors, who are trained and supported to advocate for work-life harmony. In addition, MOM will work with tripartite partners to explore and develop further support for employers to implement FWAs.



**ACTION 3****Develop career mentorship, networking opportunities and training programmes for women at work and re-entering the workforce**

Business organisations and community partners have introduced a range of new programmes such as mentorship, networking, and training opportunities for women at work at different levels and those returning to work.

The Singapore Business Federation launched the Singapore Women Entrepreneurs Network (SG-WEN) in September 2021, to nurture and support women talent and business growth. SG-WEN provides a platform to champion and recognise women entrepreneurs, facilitate knowledge sharing through networking and events, and for women entrepreneurs and business networks to collaborate in Singapore and overseas.

The Singapore Council of Women's Organisations' BoardAgender initiative also introduced a Mentoring Programme for aspiring women directors since

July 2021, to help them achieve their professional development goals.

The NTUC U Women and Family will expand its community mentoring programme to target women in mid-level management and returning to work.

MOM and WSG also offer a broad-based suite of employment facilitation programmes and services that provide support to all women jobseekers, including those looking to re-enter the workforce after a period of absence, depending on their specific needs. From 2019 – 2021, WSG collectively placed more than 68,000 women. For those who face greater challenges in re-entering the workforce, MOM and WSG will strengthen partnerships with women's organisations to increase outreach to and support for them.

**ACTION 4****Encourage greater utilisation of parental leave entitlements**

To encourage greater utilisation of parental leave, the Public Service will actively encourage eligible public officers to take all their paternity or maternity leave within the first year of their child's birth. Reminders will be sent near the leave's expiry date to officers, their supervisors, and to the HR department, to encourage officers to fully utilise the leave.

The Public Service will extend the consumption period for Additional Unpaid Infant Care Leave for public officers from within the first year to within the first two years of their child's birth.

Both measures seek to drive a culture that is Made For Families within the Public Service. We

encourage employers in the private sector to support employees in using their paternity and maternity leave, and offer additional leave measures to support parents' caregiving responsibilities.

The Prime Minister's Office – Strategy Group (PMO-SG) and MOM will continue to engage employers through the Singapore National Employers Federation and the Institute for Human Resource Professionals to share the benefits of parental leave and promote best practices to support employees in taking the leave.



## FACILITATE GREATER WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

The Government will adopt a multi-pronged approach to encourage and support women to achieve their leadership potential. In doing so, we are also mindful to guard against unintended consequences of tokenism, e.g. by imposing hard quotas.

### ACTION 5

## Revised Singapore Exchange Listing Rules and Practice Guidance to the Code of Corporate Governance to support greater board diversity, including representation of women on boards

The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) has worked with the Singapore Exchange Regulation (SGX RegCo) and the Corporate Governance Advisory Committee (CGAC) to enhance board diversity of listed companies in Singapore. With effect from 1 January 2022, the revised SGX Listing Rules require companies to disclose their board diversity policy,

including gender, skill, experience and other relevant aspects of diversity. Companies also have to disclose their targets for achieving the stipulated diversity, as well as action plans and timelines to achieve those targets. The revisions considered feedback from SGX RegCo's public consultation and recommendations from the Council for Board Diversity (CBD) to improve gender diversity on boards.



In addition, CGAC has incorporated changes to the Practice Guidance to the Code of Corporate Governance to recommend the adoption of certain good practices by listed companies on appointment of directors. These include encouraging nominating committees to take charge of board diversity, and charging them with the specific task of setting objectives for achieving board diversity and reviewing the company's progress. The Practice Guidance also recommends for nominating committees to use a variety of sources, including search firms, directors' registry or advertisements when seeking to appoint independent directors. These recommendations seek to broaden the pool of candidates (including qualified women) for companies to consider and moderate the tendency to rely on personal networks when recruiting directors.

### ACTION 6

## Increase women's representation on boards with efforts led by the Council for Board Diversity (CBD)

Other than developing and placing more women on boards, the CBD engages stakeholders on the appointment of women onto boards, carries out activities to raise public awareness of the importance

of board diversity through having women directors, and works with partners to develop a pipeline of board-ready women.

## HEAR IT FROM...



### CHERILYN TAN

*30s, founder and CEO of Asia Law Network and Tessaract.io; mother of one*

#### **How has your journey been as a female in the male-dominated tech and law sector?**

I have been interested in tech since I was 7. It was tough entering this sector as a professional. I was seen as 'just a pretty face' or 'not tech enough'. After my pregnancy, I managed to raise funds for my company and grew my business in spite of the pandemic.

#### **How did you overcome the challenges you faced?**

It's important to build relationships with fellow women in the industry, and have a good team at work and a supportive family. Women must be willing to let go and trust the people around them to do the work. At work, groom your team to represent the company well. At home, let your husband share familial duties and do not take all the responsibility on yourself.

#### **What advice would you give to fellow women keen to enter the tech sector and/or start their own business?**

Just do it. By living your dream, you become a role model for future generations. Find like-minded women to share your pains and go through the journey together, and support other women around you. Recognise the efforts of male allies too.



### MAX LOH

*50s, Managing Partner for Ernst & Young (EY) Singapore & Brunei*

#### **What motivated you to advocate for women in your workplace?**

We wanted to optimise all talents and harness different perspectives to achieve the most innovative and robust outcomes. Targeted interventions to address unconscious biases in hiring and promotion decisions led to more equal opportunities and more inclusive and respectful behaviour towards female colleagues. I also pushed for a truly flexible working environment, fully practised by management and staff.

#### **What were the key challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them?**

One challenge was to counter misperceptions that pushing for greater women leadership and participation was a "favouring women movement." Women want to be recognised on their own merits and rightfully so. It is key to level the playing field, recognise the challenges women face, and ensure that they are not denied opportunities to be the best that they can be. A consistent tone at the top was critical to drive mindset change and address gender stereotypes.

#### **What is the role of employers in creating an inclusive culture for women at work?**

Employers are pivotal in creating a supportive and inclusive work environment and career paths to enable women to excel, supporting flexible work arrangements, and mentoring/ sponsoring women so they can achieve their potential. Male colleagues play an important role in making diversity a personal and corporate priority, and actively calling out biases.

# Recognition and Support for Caregivers



## In a Nutshell

Women continue to shoulder the bulk of the caregiving load. Even as we promote supportive workplaces and encourage men to share more caregiving responsibilities, the Government will better support caregivers in the following ways:



### RECOGNISING CAREGIVERS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORTING THEIR EFFORTS

#### Action 7: Ease caregivers' load

- Enhance respite care options for caregivers
- Broaden the service scope of the Household Services Scheme to include basic child- and elder-minding services

#### Action 8: Reduce caregivers' financial strain and encourage care in the community

- Enhance the Home Caregiving Grant
- Further future support for caregivers
- Expanded the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund

#### Action 9: Enhance support for women and their children

- Enhance access to affordable and quality preschools
- Develop Child & Maternal Health & Well-being Strategy



### CARING FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CAREGIVERS AS A SOCIETY

#### Action 10: Ramp up awareness of caregiver support initiatives and provide community support

- Promote Agency for Integrated Care as a one-stop resource for caregivers of seniors
- Form community-based peer support networks for caregivers

#### Action 11: Enhance support for caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs

- Alliance for Action (AfA) on self-care and mutual support for caregivers of persons with disabilities
- Enhance inclusion and support for preschool children with developmental needs and their caregivers

## Introduction

Caregivers are the cornerstones of our families and embody the values we cherish in society. They devote their time and energy to care for loved ones, bearing significant emotional and financial costs. Caregiving will become an even more significant responsibility as our society ages. While our caregivers care for children and elderly parents willingly and with love, we as a society must recognise their sacrifices and contributions and

provide them sufficient support and real choices to pursue their aspirations.

More can be done to recognise caregivers' contributions and help alleviate their load. While more men have stepped up to assume caregiving duties, COVID-19 has revealed persistent discrepancies in gender roles at home, with women shouldering a disproportionate caregiving load.

While our caregivers care for children and elderly parents willingly and with love, we as a society must recognise their sacrifices and contributions and provide them sufficient support and real choices to pursue their aspirations.

The Survey on Women’s Development found that:

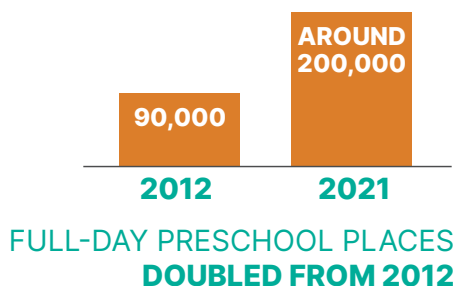
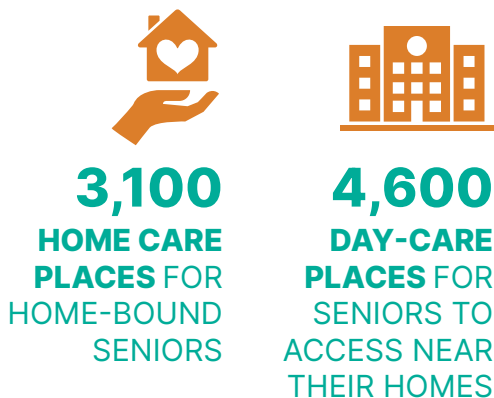
- a. Women were at least four times as likely as men to be responsible for managing housework and caregiving duties. Furthermore, women in dual-income households were five times as likely as men to do so.
- b. Among those who were currently or formerly employed, women were nearly four times as likely as men to have left their jobs due to caregiving responsibilities.

As the demand on family caregivers increases due to our ageing society, the Government has stepped up support to meet the caregiving needs of our seniors. This includes financial support, respite care services

and caregiver empowerment and training. To help ease the caregiving load, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has added around 4,600 day-care places for seniors to access near their homes, and 3,100 home care places for home-bound seniors, with up to 80% subsidy for eligible seniors, since 2015. The Caregiver Support Action Plan was also launched in 2019 to strengthen support for caregivers of seniors.

Beyond supporting caregivers of seniors, the Government has also enhanced support for other caregivers, such as mothers and caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs. The Government will continue to support families as the first line of care and support for their loved ones.

**ADDED SINCE 2015:**



# Existing Efforts to Recognise and Support Caregivers

A summary of existing efforts is below (see [Annex C](#) for more details).

## SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS OF SENIORS

### Caregiver Support Action Plan

Launched in 2019 to strengthen support for caregivers to enable seniors to age well in the community; measures include:

- Caregiver support networks to provide socio-emotional support
- Respite care options at eldercare centres and nursing homes
- Financial support to defray caregiving costs such as the Home Caregiving Grant
- Care navigation resources such as physical touchpoints (AIC Links) and online portals (e.g. Mylegacy.sg)

### Other existing measures including the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund

## SUPPORT FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

### Pregnancy

Multi-pronged approach (e.g. guidelines, preventive health services, education programmes) to equip parents and parents-to-be with the knowledge and skills on supporting healthy pregnancies and keeping their children healthy

### Childcare

Enhanced access to affordable and quality preschools:

- Full-day preschool places doubled to around 200,000, from around 90,000 in 2012
- Basic Subsidy for child and infant care for all Singapore citizen children; about 6 in 10 children also receive a means-tested Additional Subsidy

## SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

### Enabling Masterplans

Third Enabling Masterplan (2017-2021) introduced new early intervention programmes, and made special education (SPED) school fees more affordable; enhanced measures to support employment for persons with disabilities and strengthen caregiver support (e.g. Enabling Guide)

## MEASURES TO HELP CAREGIVERS BALANCE WORK AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Migrant domestic worker concessionary levy and income tax relief**

Supports women to stay in the workforce by easing the cost of hiring migrant domestic workers for households with caregiving needs

### **Household Services Scheme**

Supports households with domestic needs by allowing eligible companies to hire more migrant workers to provide part-time home cleaning services

## MEASURES TO HELP CAREGIVERS ACHIEVE RETIREMENT ADEQUACY

### **Employment and saving for retirement**

Retirement Age and Re-Employment Age will be gradually increased; increased Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution rates for those aged above 55 – 70; additional support for lower-wage workers through Workfare Income Supplement scheme, which will be further enhanced from 2023

### **Housing monetisation schemes**

Help older Singaporeans unlock their housing equity to supplement their retirement income. Lease Buyback Scheme allows members to sell a part of their flat lease in exchange for a stream of monthly income while continuing to live in it. Silver Housing Bonus provides members with a cash bonus of up to \$30,000 when they top up their Retirement Account using the proceeds received when they sell their current flat and buy a 3-room or smaller flat

### **Other schemes**

Retirement Sum Topping-Up scheme encourages CPF members to top up their and their loved ones' CPF; Matched Retirement Savings Scheme provides matching contributions for top-ups received by older Singapore citizens to support them in accumulating more for retirement; Silver Support scheme provides quarterly payouts to seniors with lower retirement savings; majority of recipients under these schemes are women



## Key Challenges and Gaps to be Addressed

### Recognition of caregivers' efforts

Caregivers play an invaluable role in caring for loved ones, but their efforts may be taken for granted. As a society, we must recognise caregivers' contributions and sacrifices

### Entrenched mindsets

Caregiving responsibilities continue to be borne mainly by women today, due to entrenched mindsets about gender roles at home

### Lack of awareness or resistance to respite care

There is low awareness of respite care services which can provide much-needed support to caregivers. Some caregivers may also resist using respite services due to a strong sense of personal responsibility to care for their loved ones

## How will we better support caregivers?

The Caregiver Support Action Plan provides a good starting point to expand efforts to recognise and empower caregivers of seniors. The Government will also enhance support for women and their children, and for caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs.



### RECOGNISING CAREGIVERS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUPPORTING THEIR EFFORTS

## The Government will enhance support schemes that help to ease caregiving load and reduce caregivers' financial strain

While no amount of money can fully compensate for caregivers' sacrifices, some extra help to alleviate the costs of caregiving can go a long way. The Government will enhance support schemes that help to reduce caregivers' caregiving load and financial strain.

### ACTION 7

## Ease caregivers' load

### Enhance respite care options for caregivers

Caregiving is a challenging and often long-term responsibility. Respite care options are important to allow caregivers to take time off for self-care and

to recharge, and to better enable them to balance their caregiving role with other commitments.

MOH is reviewing the respite care landscape to improve overall affordability, availability, and accessibility. In particular, MOH is exploring a new

home-based respite option for caregivers of home-bound seniors. Details of these initiatives will be announced later in 2022.

### **Broaden the service scope of the Household Services Scheme to include basic child- and elder-minding services**

The Household Services Scheme (HSS) allows eligible companies to hire more migrant workers to

provide part-time household services, such as home cleaning, grocery shopping and car-washing.

Given the growing caregiving needs due to our ageing population, and to better help parents balance their work and family commitments, MOM will broaden the HSS scope to include basic child- and elder-minding services.

Households will be able to engage HSS workers to look after their children at home or provide some basic assistance for their family members in activities of daily living. This will help ease our caregivers' load.

## **ACTION 8**

### **Reduce caregivers' financial strain and encourage care in the community**

#### **Enhance the Home Caregiving Grant**

MOH will enhance the Home Caregiving Grant (HCG) to recognise caregivers' contributions and further reduce the financial strain of caregiving, with more targeted support provided to lower-income families.

The HCG quantum will be increased from the existing \$200 per month to: (i) \$400 per month for beneficiaries with monthly per capita household income (PCHI) of up to \$1,200, or beneficiaries with no income who live in a residence with an annual value of \$13,000 or below; and (ii) \$250 per month for beneficiaries with PCHI between \$1,201 and \$2,800. The enhanced HCG will be rolled out by early-2023.

#### **Further future support for caregivers**

The HCG is a fairly broad-based scheme to support caregivers. There will be instances where families decide to take care of their elderly loved ones at home, instead of at an institution. When that happens, it will often involve the family engaging domestic help, or a family member having to stop work or work part-time. We expect more seniors and their families to face such situations as our population ages.

We will therefore enhance the care ecosystem for caregivers to better keep their loved ones at home instead of at nursing homes, and study the possibility of strengthening financial support for this

particular group of caregivers. This will go beyond the enhancements recommended in this White Paper, and take into account the relative subsidies between the senior staying in a nursing home, and being taken care of at home.

#### **Expanded Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund**

MOH has expanded the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF) to better support seniors with mobility needs and meet their needs over the longer term, which would benefit their caregivers, many of whom are women. From February 2022, seniors requiring replacement and customised devices can apply for SMF subsidies. The subsidy is also tiered such that low-income seniors receive more support. These measures are part of a wide-ranging review of our healthcare infrastructure to better support an ageing population.

#### **Continue with schemes to support retirement adequacy for seniors**

Other than the existing initiatives that were recently enhanced to better support seniors, MOM and the Ministry of Finance (MOF) have raised the Retirement Sum Topping-Up scheme tax relief cap<sup>5</sup> from \$7,000 (for both top-ups to self and loved ones) to \$8,000 from 1 January 2022 to encourage CPF top-ups. In addition, to help older Singapore citizens with less

<sup>5</sup> To be shared with voluntary contributions to MediSave Account from YA2023.

in savings for retirement, MOM and CPF Board will continue to explore ways to diversify top-up sources for the Matched Retirement Savings Scheme by developing a wider community of givers. These efforts will help seniors who may have had to leave the workforce during their prime working years to care for loved ones.

MOM will continue to improve the financial literacy of CPF members, including caregivers and low-income women, to raise awareness and encourage members to tap on the various schemes to accumulate sufficient CPF savings for retirement.



## ACTION 9

### Enhance support for mothers and their children

#### Enhance access to affordable and quality preschools

The Government has made significant efforts to enhance the affordability, accessibility and quality of preschool to support families with young children in their caregiving needs, and will continue to do so. The Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) will develop about 10,000 more full-day preschool places by 2023 to meet growing demand, and will continue to increase preschool places in upcoming HDB developments where there are more young families. To attract and retain more quality manpower to support the expansion of the early childhood sector, ECDA has embarked on a range of initiatives to enhance professional development and career pathways for early childhood educators, which will enable their salaries to grow in tandem with improved skills and larger, more complex job responsibilities.

80% of preschoolers can have a place in a government-supported preschool by around 2025. Over the medium term, ECDA aims to lower fee caps at government-supported preschools so that working families with a child in full-day childcare will pay around the equivalent of primary school fees plus after-school care fees, before means-tested preschool subsidies. These collective efforts provide practical solutions and

quality and affordable childcare for parents with young children, so they can go to work with peace of mind.

#### Develop Child & Maternal Health & Well-being Strategy

It is also imperative to care for mothers' health and well-being. In January 2021, an inter-agency Taskforce was set up to oversee the development of a Child & Maternal Health and Well-being Strategy to better support women and their children<sup>6</sup>. The Taskforce will develop policies, initiatives and programmes that support women's physical health, mental health, and overall well-being from preconception, through pregnancy to motherhood. This includes enhancing preventive health efforts; reviewing service delivery processes and facilitating multi-agency collaboration to address cross-cutting issues (e.g. mental wellness support for pregnant women and mothers within the family, at the workplace and in the community); and raising awareness to better engage stakeholders to support women and their children.

This effort will help every pregnant woman gain equitable access to quality maternal care services, including pre-natal and post-natal check-ups (including mental health screening and support), obstetrics services, neo-natal care, breastfeeding and lactation support.

<sup>6</sup> The Taskforce is chaired by Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli.



## CARING FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CAREGIVERS AS A SOCIETY

We must all do our part to support and care for our caregivers who play indispensable roles. The Government will raise awareness of existing support resources and work with community partners to form networks to provide socio-emotional support to caregivers. We will also enhance support measures for caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs.

### ACTION 10

## Ramp up awareness of caregiver support initiatives and provide community support

### Promote Agency for Integrated Care as a one-stop resource for caregivers of seniors

Caregiving can be a complicated and stressful affair, especially if caregivers do not know where to find the resources they need. The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) will launch a publicity campaign in 2022 to promote AIC as a one-stop resource for caregivers and raise awareness of initiatives to help caregivers navigate the landscape of resources and receive the support they need. AIC, in collaboration with other agencies such as SG Enable and the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), will roll out more tailored and bite-sized caregiving resources to empower and support caregivers in their caregiving journey.

The AIC website will also be further enhanced to improve navigation for caregiving information and resources.

### Form community-based peer support networks for caregivers

The most sustainable support for caregivers comes from the community. Fellow caregivers who best understand the joys and challenges of caregiving can share tips, and offer both practical and socio-emotional support. People's Association (PA), NCSS, and SG Cares Volunteer Centres will partner with Social Service Agencies (SSAs) to connect volunteers to form community-based peer support networks for caregivers. PA Women's Executive Committees will work with other grassroots organisations to provide training programmes and conduct outreach to caregivers. These programmes and support networks aim to involve more men and women and help dispel the notion that caregiving is a woman's responsibility.

We must all do our part to support and care for our caregivers who play indispensable roles



**ACTION 11****Enhance support for caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs****Alliance for Action (AfA) on self-care and mutual support for caregivers of persons with disabilities**

To complement the 3<sup>rd</sup> Enabling Masterplan, SG Enable and NCSS have formed an AfA on self-care and mutual support for caregivers of persons with disabilities<sup>7</sup>. The AfA brings stakeholders together to improve caregivers' well-being and enhance their caregiving capabilities through peer support and informal support networks. It will also guide implementation efforts to meet caregivers' needs and improve access to services.

**Enhance inclusion and support for preschool children with developmental needs and their caregivers**

ECDA will implement new initiatives recommended by the Inclusive Preschool Workgroup to better

support children with developmental needs and their caregivers, the majority of whom are women.

A key initiative is the Inclusive Support Programme (InSP) pilot, which integrates both early childhood education and early intervention (EI) in an inclusive preschool setting, thus allowing children to receive the EI support they need within their preschools instead of having to separately attend sessions at EI centres. This will reduce the strain that caregivers face in shuttling between preschools and EI centres. The first InSP pilot was launched in October 2021 and will be expanded to seven preschools across Singapore by June 2022.

ECDA will work with SG Enable to curate additional resources for the Enabling Guide, to deepen parents' and caregivers' understanding of developmental needs and provide information on support resources and strategies. ECDA will also strengthen support for parents, such as by developing a version of the professional practice guidelines for parents, to guide them in supporting their children as they transit from the preschool years to school-age provisions.



<sup>7</sup> The AfA builds upon a focal area under the Caregiver Action Map (which consolidates over 60 ideas from 25 SSAs, community partners and hospitals), and complements the 3<sup>rd</sup> Enabling Masterplan (2017-2021), which envisions Singapore 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.

## HEAR IT FROM...



### JESLYN TAN

*40s, stay-home mother of a 4-year old child*

#### **What are some challenges that you have experienced in your parenting journey? How did you overcome them?**

My journey has been rewarding, but I have also struggled at times. As a stay-home mother, I tend to focus so much on my family that I end up neglecting my own psychological health and well-being. It can be very mentally straining, especially since both my husband and parents work and I have no alternative caregiving arrangements.

The Government's financial support schemes have helped to subsidise the costs of raising a child, e.g. Baby Bonus grants, preschool subsidies and CHAS benefits. Being able to work flexible hours as a freelancer also allowed me to earn some income while having the ability to take time off to tend to my child's needs whenever necessary.

#### **What can the community do to better support fellow parents?**

There are many community groups out there. More targeted support groups can be set up for parents, to give them the opportunity to interact with others who are facing similar issues, and learn from each other about the importance of treating themselves better. Employers can also organise more family bonding days or activities, e.g. provide vouchers for employees to spend time with their families.

#### **What is one piece of encouragement you would give to fellow parents?**

You must treat yourself better and take care of your own well-being before you can treat your family well.



### RICHARD ASHWORTH

*60s, full-time caregiver for his father*

#### **How long have you been a caregiver for your father? How has your journey been?**

I retired from my job 22 years ago to care for my father when he was diagnosed with colon cancer. It was manageable at first but became really hard when his dementia kicked in. My father would sometimes get violent with me and around people. Thankfully, I received support from my neighbour and organisations like Dementia Singapore and Caregivers Alliance Limited.

#### **How do you think community-led support can complement these financial schemes to help fellow caregivers recover from their challenges?**

I started volunteering with Caregivers Alliance Limited after benefitting from their caregiver support programmes and hearing other caregivers' stories. I think it is important to raise awareness of Government and community resources to support caregivers of the elderly. I am now a volunteer caregiver trainer, and I hope that I can help other caregivers find strength to solve the issues they are facing, and provide respite for them so they do not feel alone and give up on their journey.

#### **What is one piece of encouragement you would give to fellow caregivers?**

When the going gets tough, remember the love that you have for your family member, be patient and tolerant when dealing with him or her, and be confident that you can do it. This will tide you through.

# Protection Against Violence and Harm



#SignalForHelp

## In a Nutshell

Singapore must remain a place where all are and can feel safe. The Government will continue to enhance protection of women against violence and harm in the following ways:



### TAKING A STRONG STANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND HARM

#### Action 12: Revised sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences

- Increased penalties for three sexual offences in the Penal Code
- AGC will generally object to rehabilitative sentences for adult offenders who commit sexual and hurt offences
- Publication of “Guide on Sentencing in Singapore” to raise understanding of the sentencing process

#### Action 13: Enhance protection for victim-survivors of family violence

- Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance preventive efforts for persons at risk
- Make it easier for victim-survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help
- Strengthen protection and support for victim-survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again
- Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation

#### Action 14: Raise awareness and accessibility of resources for victims of online harms

- Alliance for Action (AfA) to tackle online harms, especially those targeted at women and girls



### REINFORCING A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND RESPECT IN SOCIETY

#### Action 15: Strengthen support and awareness of resources to address workplace harassment

- Raise awareness of available resources for employers and avenues of help for affected employees
- Strengthen Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices’ (TAFEP) case management and referral partnerships

#### Action 16: Implement a national framework to promote Safe Sport

- Establish Unified Code for Safe Sport
- Establish Case Management Unit under Safe Sport Commission
- Launch Safe Sport mark for sports organisations

#### Action 17: Promote values of respect and safety through education

- Implement compulsory modules in all Institutes of Higher Learning on respect and appropriate behaviour for staff and students
- Continue efforts in schools to emphasise the teaching of values, cyber wellness and the importance of respecting personal boundaries both online and in-person
- Teach children in preschool about body safety awareness



## Introduction



Singapore must be a place where all are and can feel safe. The Government is committed to protecting all Singaporeans from harm. Violence or harm against women or men must not be tolerated.

Singapore is one of the safest countries in the world. Since 2017, we have been ranked first in Gallup's Global Law and Order report. Nevertheless, sexual and hurt offences against women still occur and have taken on new forms, such as in the online realm<sup>8</sup>. The number of enquiries and new cases of family violence handled by Family Violence Specialist Centres (FVSCs) and PAVE Integrated Service for Individual and Family Protection Specialist Centre (ISIFPSC) have also increased in recent years<sup>9</sup>. This upward trend may have been due to increased public awareness of family violence and may have also been exacerbated by the additional stress and conflict experienced by families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has taken decisive measures to combat violence and harm against women, particularly through legislation and enforcement. These measures strengthen protection for victims of sexual and hurt offences in various settings and have evolved to meet the changing context and nature of harms such as emerging trends in the online sphere. Beyond safeguards and enforcement measures, we must also address the deeper societal mindsets that influence perpetrators' beliefs and behaviour. Parents and teachers can play a key role in instilling the value of respect between men and women in our young.

▶ Singapore must be a place where all are and can feel safe. The Government is committed to protecting all Singaporeans from harm. Violence or harm against women or men must not be tolerated.

<sup>8</sup> In 2020, there were 650 reported cases of voyeurism and distribution of intimate images.

<sup>9</sup> From FY2018 – FY2020, the number of enquiries received and new cases taken up by FVSCs and the ISIFPSC increased from 2,906 – 4,574 and 891 – 1,103 respectively. Some of the enquiries concerned the same cases. The prevalence of domestic violence in Singapore is approximately 3% of the population based on administrative data, and ranges from 3% – 20% based on self-reported data.

# Existing Efforts in Protection Against Violence and Harm

A summary of existing efforts is below (see [Annex C](#) for more details).

## NURTURING HEALTHY MINDSETS AND VALUES OF RESPECT THROUGH EDUCATION

### Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in schools

Sexuality Education in CCE provides students with accurate and developmentally-appropriate information and skills so that they can make informed and responsible decisions and better protect themselves; refreshed CCE curriculum emphasises moral values, cyber wellness and the importance of respecting personal boundaries online and in-person

### Measures to address sexual misconduct in schools and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)

Timely and sensitive support and counselling for victims of sexual misconduct in schools; enhanced preventive efforts in IHLs through education and training, campus safety and security, victim support, and disciplinary measures for perpetrators

## PROTECTION AGAINST SEXUAL AND HURT OFFENCES

### Legislation

Laws and policies are regularly reviewed and enhanced, e.g.

- Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) enacted in 2014 to address anti-social and undesirable behaviours such as harassment and stalking
- Amendments to Criminal Procedure Code and Evidence Act in 2018 and Penal Code and POHA in 2019 to further enhance protection of victims and increase penalties for perpetrators

### Support for victim-survivors of sexual and hurt offences

Police officers, judges and judicial officers regularly undergo sensitivity training; One-Stop Abuse Forensic Examination (OneSAFE) Centre set up to bring together emotional support, medical attention, and investigation for victim-survivors of sexual assault; One-Stop Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Interview model implemented to integrate interviews by various parties into a single interview so child victim-survivors of sexual abuse need not repeatedly recount their experience; relevant information on investigation and court processes, including victim-survivor care and support measures, is available at all Neighbourhood Police Centres and on Singapore Police Force (SPF)'s website

## PROTECTION AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

### Legislation

All persons experiencing family violence may apply for protection orders under the Women's Charter; Mandatory Counselling Programme aims to keep family members safe and reduce risk of violence recurring; supplemented by relevant provisions under POHA and the Penal Code

### Support for victim-survivors of family violence

FVSCs and Family Service Centres (FSCs) provide support to survivors and perpetrators, while crisis shelters provide temporary accommodation for those unable to return home; close partnership between the Police and FVSCs/FSCs to monitor and ensure safety of victim-survivors

### Public education and detection

"Break the Silence | Against Family Violence" campaign to raise awareness of family violence; National Anti-Violence Helpline (NAVH) launched in 2021 to make it easier for survivors and the public to seek help

## PROTECTION OF WOMEN ACROSS DOMAINS

### Online harms

Regulations (e.g. Broadcasting Act) prohibit egregious material from being broadcasted in or from Singapore, including harmful content which promotes sexual violence; Digital for Life movement to help Singaporeans lead digitally-enriched lives, promote responsible online behaviours and drive awareness of online harms, including resources by the Media Literacy Council on harms such as sexual grooming, pornography, body image issues, cyberbullying and online harassment

### Workplace harassment

TGFEP requires employers to handle grievances independently, objectively and confidentially, including those related to workplace harassment; TAFEP's Workplace Harassment Resource and Recourse Centre provides support for affected workers, and guides employers on how to prevent and respond to workplace harassment

### Safe sport

Safe Sport Commission spearheads implementation of safe sport efforts in partnership with sporting associations, coaches and other stakeholders; Safe Sport Support Network of befrienders and counsellors will be established to better support victims of harassment in the sporting environment

## Key Challenges and Gaps to be Addressed

### Barriers to reporting cases of harm

Victim-survivors may be hesitant to report offences or seek help for various personal reasons, e.g. fear of breaking up the family in the case of family violence, fear of retaliation in the workplace, or a general fear of being “victim-shamed”

### Strengthening the role of the community

Everyone has a role in creating safe spaces for women. For example, bystanders can help to report suspected instances of family violence. Similarly, those who witness harassment in the workplace, online or in other settings can support victim-survivors and help them seek redress

### Changing mindsets to change behaviour

Children may pick up negative ideas from their surroundings or online. There is a need to instil the right values from young (e.g. respect for personal boundaries) to address violence and harm against women. Parents and teachers should model these values to children in both word and deed, such as addressing objectification of women and speaking out against “locker room talk”

## How will we enhance protection of women against violence and harm?

Protecting women against violence and harm requires a comprehensive approach. The Government will take the lead by enhancing measures to protect women in different domains – at home, in schools, workplaces, and public spaces.



### TAKING A STRONG STANCE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND HARM

The Government will enhance our laws and policies to better protect women against violence and harm, including emerging trends such as online harms, and send a strong signal that these acts are not tolerated in our society.

## ACTION 12

### Revised sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences

The Government has reviewed the sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences, following a number of such cases in 2019 and 2020, to ensure that the punishments meted out reflect the seriousness of such acts as gross violations of our fundamental values.

The starting point of the review was that such acts cannot be condoned, and offenders should expect to face the full force of the law. For adult offenders in such cases, the principles of proportionate punishment and deterrence should generally take precedence over rehabilitation. The offender will not receive a lighter sentence simply because he has higher educational qualifications or social status.

To reflect this position:

In September 2021, a Bill was passed to increase the penalties for three sexual offences in the Penal Code, namely:

- a. Outrage of modesty;
- b. Sexual activity in the presence of a minor, or causing a minor to view a sexual image, where the minor is between 14 – 16 years of age; and

- c. Sexual activity in the presence of a minor, or causing a minor to view a sexual image, where the minor is between 16 – 18 years of age and the offender is in an exploitative relationship with the minor.

The Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) will generally object to rehabilitative sentences, such as probation and community-based sentences, for adult offenders who commit certain sexual and hurt offences, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

An online "Guide on Sentencing in Singapore" was also published in March 2021. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Law (MinLaw) worked with AGC and the Law Society to prepare the Guide, which seeks to better educate the public about the sentencing process. The Guide explains the sentencing process in the courts, and addresses important questions of public interest like the objectives of sentencing, types of sentences, factors which are taken into consideration, and how the Court decides what sentence to impose.

## ACTION 13

### Enhance protection for victim-survivors of family violence

The home in particular should be a safe space. Unfortunately, instances of family violence still occur. Family violence is complex and multi-faceted. The multi-stakeholder Taskforce on Family Violence (FVTF)<sup>10</sup> released a report in September 2021, containing 16 recommendations organised along four key areas to tackle family violence (see [Annex D](#)):

- a. Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance

- preventive efforts for persons at risk;
- b. Make it easier for victim-survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help;
- c. Strengthen protection and support for victim-survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again; and
- d. Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation.

<sup>10</sup> The FVTF was co-chaired by Minister of State (Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education) Sun Xueling and Minister of State (Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development) A/P Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim. It comprised members from SSAs, NGOs, the Courts, hospitals, and Government agencies.

In October 2021, the Government accepted, in principle, all the recommendations of the Taskforce, with a view to implementing them over the next few years.

Today, when a victim reports a family violence case to the Police, only the Police will respond to the scene. There is currently only immediate onsite social service intervention available for child abuse and vulnerable adult abuse cases.

Hence, the Taskforce recommended enhancing the family violence response framework, such that the Police and social service professionals jointly respond to family violence cases reported to the Police when there are immediate safety risks. Depending on the case, Police may initiate investigations and actions will be taken if a criminal offence has been committed. Social service professionals will work with the families to address their immediate safety issues to reduce the risk of violence recurring. Where needed, the social service professionals can facilitate arrangements to help victim-survivors move out of their home temporarily, while longer-term interventions are being worked out.

The Victim Care Cadre Programme is currently offered to victims who require emotional support after a potentially traumatic incident. To provide young victims of family violence with greater support during investigations, the Taskforce recommends that the Victim Care Cadre Programme be made mandatory for these young victims without a suitable accompanying adult when there are sufficient Victim Care Officers.

Where perpetrators have treatable mental conditions that might have contributed to and/or exacerbated

the risk of family violence, the Taskforce also recommended to empower the Court to order these perpetrators to undergo mandatory assessment by an appointed psychiatrist and/or psychiatric treatment, where necessary.

Another key recommendation by the Taskforce was to raise awareness of family violence through public education campaigns, including to encourage prompt and discreet reporting by persons experiencing violence. The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) launched the refreshed Break the Silence Campaign in November 2021, which unpacked different types of abuse, such as psychological, emotional and sexual abuse so that people can more easily identify them and seek help. The refreshed campaign also introduced and promoted the use of the Signal for Help. This hand signal is meant to be a subtle and additional mode of reporting for survivors of family violence, if they are unable to seek help through a helpline. The Signal for Help is also featured in the Break the Silence campaign logo, designed by a student from the School of the Arts Singapore.

From 1 May 2022, the NAVH will be the one-stop national helpline for all persons who experience any form of violence, including sexual violence and sexual harassment. To reflect the suite of services it provides, the NAVH will be renamed as the National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment Helpline (the acronym remains as NAVH). MSF will also expand the NAVH to include new modes of reporting (e.g. via web link or mobile application) by end-2022 and look into ways to better support survivors of all types of violence.



**Do not stay silent or walk away  
when you witness violence.**

**You can STOP the violence.  
Step in. Offer Help.**

**Call the NAVH**

**1800-777-0000**

**ACTION 14****Raise awareness and accessibility of resources for victims of online harms**

The Ministry of Communication and Information's (MCI) Sunlight AfA brings together the people, public and private sectors to co-create initiatives to tackle online harms, especially those targeted at women and girls.<sup>11</sup> These include emerging issues such as sexual grooming, harassment through digital means, and non-consensual publication and circulation of sexually explicit images online.

The Sunlight AfA supports the broader Digital for Life movement and will examine (i) how to better provide support and resources to victims, and (ii) education and outreach efforts to raise awareness on the need for everyone to protect themselves and their loved ones against online harms and foster a safer and more responsible online space.

The AfA's work covers a number of areas, including Public Education, Victim Support, Youth Engagement, Research and Volunteerism, and has consistently engaged the community for greater outreach. For example, from July – October 2021, MCI collaborated with DBS and the Singapore Judiciary on a community hackathon – "Hackathon for a Better World", where 28 teams were involved in co-creating innovative solutions for safer and kinder online spaces. The AfA also organised a webinar on Safer Internet Day on 8 February 2022 on closing the digital safety gap for women and girls in Singapore, and helping children stay safe online.

MCI and MHA are studying the experiences and regulatory models in other countries and are reviewing local regulations to improve online safety.

All Singaporeans have a part to play to reinforce a culture of safety and respect in our society. We can actively speak out against disrespect and objectification of women.

**REINFORCING A CULTURE OF SAFETY AND RESPECT IN SOCIETY**

All Singaporeans have a part to play to reinforce a culture of safety and respect in our society. We can actively speak out against disrespect and objectification of women and work together to ensure Singapore continues to be a place where women and men feel safe, secure, and able to participate fully in society.

The Government will work with stakeholders to strengthen this culture, including to create a safe environment for victims to report instances of harm or violence. We will also enhance upstream educational efforts, which are crucial to engender mindset shifts in the long run.

**ACTION 15****Strengthen support and awareness of resources to address workplace harassment**

MOM and TAFEP will raise awareness of the Workplace Harassment Resource and Recourse Centre so that employees will feel safe and

more confident in seeking help if they encounter workplace harassment. TAFEP will also work closely with tripartite partners to train key personnel such as

<sup>11</sup> The Sunlight AfA is co-chaired by Senior Minister of State (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development) Sim Ann and Parliamentary Secretary (Ministry of Health and Ministry of Communications and Information) Rahayu Mahzam. The Sunlight AfA brings together 48 stakeholders from diverse fields of expertise to develop solutions to tackle online harms. These stakeholders include researchers, legal and social service professionals, media and content producers, representatives from technology companies, parents, and youths.

HR, line managers and supervisors to adopt policies to prevent and manage workplace harassment, and ensure a safe and conducive work environment.

MOM and TAFEP will also work closely with key stakeholders (e.g. tripartite partners, police and NGOs) to strengthen existing case management

and referral partnerships for workplace harassment, as well as provide more specific guidance and training for employers, especially SMEs, to put in place proper grievance handling processes and workplace harassment policies to help and support affected employees.

## ACTION 16

### Implement a national framework to promote Safe Sport

In March 2021, Sport Singapore announced the Safe Sport Programme to be established through the Safe Sport Commission. The Programme will support organisations in advocating Safe Sport behaviours through the “Safeguard, Address, and Assure” framework:

- a. **Safeguard:** The Unified Code will define sexual, psychological and physical misconduct, including present-day threats posed by cyberbullying, hazing and online harassment. The Code was developed in consultation with the sporting community<sup>12</sup>, government agencies and NGOs, and will facilitate Safe Sport policy formulation, adoption and implementation.
- b. **Address:** A central Case Management Unit under the Safe Sport Commission was set up
- c. **Assure:** A Safe Sport mark will be implemented from 2022 to identify sports organisations that are committed to providing a safe sporting environment. Organisations will be assessed based on their adoption of the Unified Code and implementation of relevant policies such as training, independent incident management processes and disciplinary processes.

to support sporting organisations and improve management of safe sport incidents. The Unit will have powers to investigate and resolve cases and will establish clear and robust processes to provide a fair and empathetic process. Affected persons will receive support throughout the investigation process.

## ACTION 17

### Promote values of respect and safety through education

#### Enhance education on respect and appropriate behaviour in Institutes of Higher Learning

Schools and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) currently teach students how to protect themselves online and in-person, and to understand Singapore’s laws against sexual abuse or harassment. For example, the refreshed CCE curriculum (implemented progressively since 2021)

includes a greater emphasis on moral values, cyber wellness and the importance of respecting personal boundaries online and in-person. The IHLs also have ongoing efforts to educate and train members of their community on respect and appropriate behaviour, as well as Codes of Conduct that students and staff have to abide by.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) will enhance efforts to ensure that students at IHLs have a safe

<sup>12</sup> Community consultations were held with athletes, parents, coaches, sport administrators, volunteers and organisational leaders from April – October 2021. The Singapore National Olympic Council and Singapore National Paralympic Committee were also consulted.



space to learn. As of 3Q 2021, all IHLs have put in place compulsory modules for staff on respect and appropriate behaviour. These modules cover practical information such as what constitutes sexual misconduct and harassment, the reporting and grievance channels, and available support measures. They also delve into topics aimed at promoting shifts in culture and mindset, such as key elements of respect and consent and being an active bystander.

Most IHLs already have compulsory modules on respect and appropriate behaviour for students, and the remaining IHLs will roll out such modules by mid-2022. This includes modules on respect and consent in the Autonomous Universities. All polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) will put in place compulsory components for students covering the importance of healthy relationships, respect and appropriate behaviour, and gender equality by mid-2022. This will augment current efforts that cover respect and healthy relationships more broadly.

The IHLs will continually review and improve the content coverage in their compulsory modules on

respect and appropriate behaviour, and are open to feedback from staff and students to ensure that the modules remain relevant and useful. As part of capability-building efforts, IHLs will also share materials and best practices with one another.

### **Teach children in preschool about body safety awareness**

MOE will revise the Nurturing Early Learners framework by end-2022 where preschool teachers will be encouraged to teach children aged 4 – 6 appropriate behaviours that promote self and group safety. These include body safety awareness (e.g. to recognise safe and unsafe touches), how to talk about feelings, and how to seek help from adults when they feel hurt or unsafe. ECDA is enhancing training content for preschool teachers to include body safety, and will encourage current educators to attend courses offered by the Singapore Children's Society. This complements ongoing efforts to conduct family violence awareness training with preschools.



## HEAR IT FROM...



### LORRAINE LIM

40s, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)

#### **What programmes/initiatives does SCWO provide to tackle violence and harm against women?**

SCWO's Star Shelter and Maintenance Support Central serve women and children who experience gender-based violence, such as physical, financial, emotional and psychological abuse. Many were trapped in a cycle of violence and were not aware of the warning signs, nor of the available support. Education and counselling can help women heal and take steps to protect themselves and their children, including moving on from abusive relationships.

#### **What are some emerging trends of violence and harm against women?**

A key emerging area is online harm, where abusers leverage social media platforms to continue their emotional and psychological abuse of victims. Some users of our services have shared that the abusers would use social media to post derogatory remarks about them or air dirty linen to embarrass the victim in front of their friends and family. The victims shared that they are often anxious and unable to focus on their work or take care of their children. Such emotional violence can be as harmful as physical abuse and the invisible 'bruises' may take even longer to heal.

#### **What is the community's role in tackling violence and harm against women?**

It takes a whole-of-society approach to tackle violence and harm against women. For example, the Government can work with NGOs to train first responders in the community to detect and react to signs of violence. It is also crucial to raise awareness and encourage more survivors to speak up publicly. Together we can do much more.



### KHAIRUL HILMI

30s, Registered Psychologist

#### **What sparked your interest in combating violence against women?**

When working in an FSC, I observed first-hand the effects of violence on women and children and saw the power imbalance that women faced in such cases. Society still tends to see family violence as a closed-door issue that should be resolved internally. Some male peers also say that it's not "our" problem. Hence, I decided to advocate on this issue to combat violence against women.

#### **What were some common challenges faced by families whom you've come across during this journey?**

Victims tend to remain in the cycle of violence and stay with the perpetrator for a variety of reasons, e.g. entrenched gender roles and societal norms, afraid of bringing shame to their family and themselves. It may also be challenging to link up families experiencing violence with resources.

#### **What do you think the community can do to better protect women against violence?**

I believe the community has a larger role to play in combating family violence. We need to address the "bystander" effect and find the courage to call out cases of family violence. We need to educate the community and be more open to talk about family violence, to identify and support those who might be at risk or are victims of family violence.

We should also start addressing men's health (e.g. talking about emotions, understanding violence and stressors) while tackling family violence as statistically, men are more likely to be the perpetrator.

# Other Support Measures for Women



## In a Nutshell



The Government will better support various groups of women in the following ways:

### Action 18: Enhance support for single parents

- Alliance for Action (AfA) to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships – Focal Area 4 on “Support for Single Parents”

### Action 19: Enhance support for divorcing/divorced women

- Introduced option for couples to file for Divorce by Mutual Agreement of the Irretrievable Breakdown of the Marriage
- Extended Mandatory Parenting Programme to divorcing parents with minor children (who file on the simplified track)
- Enhance maintenance enforcement
- Launched online portal to support couples contemplating divorce

### Action 20: Enhance support for low-income families with children

- Pilot childminding service
- Expand KidSTART

### Action 21: Provide women the choice to undergo elective egg freezing

- Women aged 21 – 35 years, regardless of marital status, can choose to undergo elective egg freezing. Only legally married couples can use their frozen eggs for procreation

## Introduction

Singapore must remain an inclusive society where no one is left behind. We must be mindful of women who need more help owing to their circumstances.

Some groups of women may be more vulnerable as they face greater financial and emotional stressors, and need more help with employment, socio-emotional support and caregiving. We must actively walk alongside them, to care for and support them.

Some groups of women may be more vulnerable as they face greater financial and emotional stressors, and need more help with employment, socio-emotional support and caregiving. We must actively walk alongside them, to care for and support them.

Singapore’s social compact has evolved over the years. Basic social assistance was provided post-Independence to manage our scarce resources. The Government has since enhanced social support measures and partnered the community to provide more holistic and comprehensive support to those in need. ComCare was launched in 2005 as a key component of our social safety net, building on schemes launched in the 1990s such as Edusave, MediFund and CPF Housing Grants. Initiatives were also rolled out to improve social service delivery and accessibility, forge stronger community

partnerships and strengthen personal well-being. Today, the Government provides multiple layers of assistance to address the specific needs of individuals and families, built on the foundation of individual responsibility, family support and care from the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes to all our lives and led to stressors that affect our mental well-being, especially for women. The Government has enhanced efforts to support all persons with mental health needs during this trying period. For example, a National Care

Hotline was set up in April 2020 to provide emotional support and psychological first aid to individuals and families affected by COVID-19. Workplace advisories were also issued to guide employers on supporting their employees' mental well-being. An Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being<sup>13</sup> was set up in July 2021 to oversee mental health and well-being efforts.

The Government will strengthen efforts to support various groups of women and enable them to pursue their aspirations regardless of personal circumstances.

## Existing Efforts to Support Various Groups of Women

A summary of existing efforts is below (see [Annex C](#) for more details).

### SUPPORT FOR SINGLE PARENTS AND LOW-INCOME WOMEN

#### Financial and social-emotional support

Social Service Offices (SSOs) provide financial assistance and referrals for employment assistance and other forms of support; Family Service Centres (FSCs) provide family-related and socio-emotional support

#### Housing

The Housing & Development Board (HDB) assists single unwed parents with their housing needs and assesses each case holistically to ensure their children have a stable home to grow up in

#### Community Link

Coordinates community stakeholders and resources to offer customised programmes and services for families with children living in rental housing; to expand from 4 sites currently to 21 towns nationwide by 2022

#### Community initiatives

There are many community support initiatives for vulnerable groups of women, covering income and employment, unplanned pregnancies and support for single parents and widows

<sup>13</sup> The Taskforce is chaired by Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State (Ministry of Communications and Information and Ministry of Health), and supported by MOH and MSF.

## SUPPORT FOR DIVORCING/DIVORCED WOMEN

### Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP)

Supports divorcing parents of minor children to make informed decisions that prioritise the well-being of their children. The MPP helps parents understand the importance of co-parenting and the practical issues arising from a divorce that impact their children (e.g., housing, finances)

### Specialised support

Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centres (FAM@FSCs) and Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs) provide additional support for divorcing and divorced families

## SUPPORT FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

### Support schemes

All Singapore citizen children benefit from schemes that support their caregiving, growth and development, such as Child Development Account benefits, preschool, and healthcare subsidies

### KidSTART

Provides upstream support to children aged 0 – 6 from low-income families by equipping parents with knowledge and skills to nurture their children, and helping parents enrol their children in preschools

## Key Challenges and Gaps to be Addressed

### Awareness of available support schemes

There is scope to further increase awareness of support schemes on top of ongoing efforts, to ensure more families receive the support they need

### Lack of alternative caregiving options

Flexible childminding services was identified as a useful option for some low-income families with children living in rental flats and single parents who engage in shift work or have irregular working hours, and have no alternative caregiving arrangements

### Difficulties during and after divorce

Divorced women often face financial challenges, including obtaining maintenance. The current process for enforcing maintenance orders may also be time-consuming for some. Improving access to marital counselling and mediation can also help to encourage marital reconciliation, or better prepare divorcing couples for life after divorce

## How will we **better support** various groups of women?

The Government will build upon existing schemes and enhance support for women who may need more help, including single unwed mothers, divorcing/divorced and low-income women.



### **ACTION 18**

## **Enhance support for single parents**

In August 2021, MSF set up an AfA to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships<sup>14</sup>. “Support for Single Parents” is one of six focal areas under the AfA and brings together professionals from various backgrounds, ranging from social work to law who are familiar with the needs of single parents, to enable single parents to better care for their children and raise their families through strengthening the ecosystem of support. They will:

a. Consider how support can be strengthened for unwed parents and those who become single parents through divorce and widowhood; and

b. Partner community groups to develop pilot programmes or support networks for single parents to seek help in their parenting journey.

The AfA engaged single parents in focus group discussions to understand their challenges first-hand in accessing childcare, employment and housing, and consider how to enhance support for single parents. The AfA is exploring ways to enhance single parents’ access to information, alternative childcare arrangements, flexible employment opportunities and socio-emotional support tailored to address the high stress and stigma faced by single parents.

<sup>14</sup> The AfA is led by Minister of State (Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education) Sun Xueling. It seeks to nurture and co-create an ecosystem to strengthen marriages and family relationships, in partnership with the community. The AfA will have a bias for action and start off with six focal areas – FA1: Outreach efforts to families through and with community partners; FA2: Support for Newlyweds; FA3: Parenting Together; FA4: Support for Single Parents; FA5: Support for Families with Early Risks; FA6: Strengthening Marriages and Families in Faith Communities.

## ACTION 19

### Enhance support for divorcing/divorced women

To reduce acrimony in the divorce process, MSF has introduced a sixth fact of Divorce by Mutual Agreement of the Irretrievable Breakdown of the Marriage (DMA), which parties may cite where they both agree on the divorce. Parties will be required to submit to the court the reasons leading them to conclude that their marriage has irretrievably broken down, efforts to reconcile, and considerations given to the arrangements to be made for their children (if any) and their financial affairs. In this way, parties may jointly take responsibility for the breakdown of their marriage rather than place the blame solely on one party. This also sets parties in the right frame to jointly consider their children and financial affairs, which would reduce tensions when they decide on these issues. Current safeguards such as the 3-year minimum period of marriage before divorce can be filed, the 3-month minimum period before a divorce is finalised, and the current five facts<sup>15</sup> that parties may cite to prove the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, will be retained.

Currently, parents of minor children who file for divorce on the standard track are required to attend the Mandatory Parenting Programme before filing for divorce. MSF has extended this to parents with minor children who file on the simplified track.

MSF, MinLaw, and the Family Justice Courts are working on making maintenance enforcement easier, more efficient and effective, and to minimise the need for repeat enforcement. The current maintenance enforcement process can be time-consuming and may involve repeated enforcement attempts if the respondent is uncooperative. It can also be challenging for parties who are unrepresented by a lawyer to navigate as the adversarial process requires them to present their case to the Judge. The Government is looking to improve the maintenance enforcement process by making it simpler and less legalistic.

An online portal, Family Assist, was launched in December 2021 to support couples who are contemplating divorce. For those who are open to saving their marriage, the portal provides information and supports them to do so, for example through links to marital counselling services. For those who have decided to proceed with divorce, the portal aims to provide them with information and services to enable them to make informed decisions in the best interest of their children. These include psycho-education content, such as co-parenting and the impact of divorce on children. The portal also consolidates information and resources that those contemplating divorce need such as matters related to HDB flats, CPF and maintenance.

The Government will build upon existing schemes and enhance support for women who may need more help, including single unwed mothers, divorcing/divorced and low-income women.

<sup>15</sup> The current five facts are: adultery, unreasonable behaviour, desertion, separation of three years with spouses' consent, or separation of four years without spouses' consent.





## ACTION 20

### Enhance support for low-income families with children

#### Pilot childminding service

MSF is partnering Daughters Of Tomorrow to pilot a childminding service that can support low-income families, including single unwed parents, who require alternative caregiving options. The pilot will operate beyond regular childcare and student care centres' operating hours and cater to the needs of low-income parents who may have irregular work schedules. The pilot aims to help relieve the caregiving responsibilities of parents, and in so

doing, raise the prospects of low-income families in finding employment/upgrading their skills to work towards financial stability and self-reliance. MSF will review the demand for and sustainability of such services and assess the potential to scale up the pilot.

#### Expand KidSTART

ECDA is expanding KidSTART to more regions to support 5,000 children by 2023, to support

caregivers, most of whom are mothers, from low-income families with knowledge and skills to nurture their children's early development, and

facilitate preschool enrolment of their child. ECDA will then progressively expand the programme nationwide to reach even more eligible families.

## ACTION 21

### Provide women the choice to undergo elective egg freezing

The Government supports and encourages Singaporeans to pursue their marriage and parenthood aspirations as early as possible, to increase the chances of conceiving naturally and reduce the chance of age-related problems. However, we recognise that some women desire to preserve fertility because of their personal circumstances, for example, those who are not able to find a partner while they are younger, but wish to have the chance of conceiving if they marry later.

The Government has studied the options and recognises that there is no compelling medical reason to prohibit elective egg freezing as it is medically viable. Moving forward, all women aged 21 – 35 years (as aligned with the age limits for egg donation), regardless of their marital status,

can choose to undergo elective egg freezing, with sufficient safeguards. The implementation of elective egg freezing will be in tandem with the introduction of the Assisted Reproduction Services Regulations under the Healthcare Services Act in early-2023. To ensure that women are able to make an informed choice, these safeguards include pre-procedure counselling for elective egg freezing to highlight its invasive nature, limitations e.g. low success rate of live births, that it does not guarantee motherhood, risks of late pregnancy, challenges of aged parenthood, and costs of elective egg freezing such as for storage and insurance. Consistent with upholding parenthood within marriage and the existing Assisted Reproduction regulatory framework, only legally married couples can use their frozen eggs for procreation.



## HEAR IT FROM...



### SUSAN NG

*60s, Radio Presenter, member of AfA to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships*

#### **What prompted you to become a champion for single parents, including single unwed mothers?**

I am a single parent. While I was lucky to have been supported in my journey, other single parents could have found it isolating and difficult financially or psychologically. I wanted to champion the causes of single parents, so that their needs are heard and supported.

#### **What are some of the challenges that single parents face?**

Financial constraints and caregiving issues are some of the key challenges that many single parents face, and are intertwined. Without alternative caregiving arrangements, many single parents face employment challenges especially if employers do not provide flexible work arrangements. This in turn affects their ability to build their financial resources. Many single parents may also be unaware of the various support schemes in the community that are available.

#### **What kind of support do you think is necessary for these single parents?**

Beyond financial and caregiving support, I feel that it is important to look into the mental wellness of single parents, as they often experience pressure from multiple stressors and can be overwhelmed, e.g. taking care of a child singlehandedly while undergoing a divorce.

A support network can enable single parents to easily access resources and practical skills and knowledge that would help them in their daily lives, e.g. financial literacy. I hope the wider community can also be more empathetic and understanding towards single parents.



### AMOLAT SINGH

*60s, family and criminal lawyer, founder of Amolat & Partners*

#### **What has your experience been working with divorcees and other vulnerable families?**

I saw how dysfunctional family backgrounds affected my clients and trapped them in a cycle of poverty. I saw how young children are robbed of their innocence as they watch their father beat up their mother. I saw wives suffer in silence because their husbands were the breadwinners, and how hard it was to persuade these victims to seek protection from the law. I am blessed that with my training and practice as a lawyer, I can help make their struggles in life a little more bearable, e.g. helping clients from personal protection applications to divorce cases.

#### **What are some of the challenges that vulnerable families, such as divorcees, face?**

Money is the biggest challenge and often plays a part in deciding custody; enforcing maintenance orders can also be difficult. Divorcing women undergo a fundamental change in their lives and can face emotional stressors. Counselling and other medical intervention can help them to cope with these changes. For children, they often would need help especially in school and teachers play an important role in this.

#### **What advice would you give someone who wishes to help these vulnerable families?**

Be ready, willing, and able to walk the journey with these families.

# Mindset Shifts



## In a Nutshell



To achieve our shared vision of a fairer and more inclusive society for all men and women, fundamental mindset shifts are needed. The Government will play its part in catalysing the shift in these ways:

**Action 22: Updated the Women's Charter to better reflect women's equal status as men in marriage**

**Action 23: Address mental models arising from societal stereotypes**

- Implement Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum to address equity of familial roles
- Address gender stereotypes about careers through education
- Work with community partners to change mindsets

**Action 24: Develop gender-responsive standards under the Singapore Standardisation Programme**

**Action 25: Dedicate a public garden to honour and celebrate pioneering spirit of Singapore women**

## Introduction

Singapore women have achieved significant progress over the years. Even as the Government is enhancing efforts to support women across various fronts in the workplace, family, and society, fundamental mindset shifts are needed to make the next bound of progress. This requires a whole-of-society effort, where organisations and community partners, families and individuals all play their part.

**Fundamental mindset shifts are needed to make the next bound of progress.**

The idea that women deserve equal recognition and respect may be unremarkable today but was considered radical just a few decades before. This is the result of gradual and ongoing mindset shifts over time. Findings from the World Values Survey 2020 indicated shifts in Singaporeans' attitudes towards gender roles since 2002. For instance, 69% of respondents in 2020 disagreed with the statement that men make better political leaders than women do, compared to 44% in 2002. Likewise, fewer respondents agreed with

the notions that (i) men have more right to a job than women if jobs are scarce, (ii) a university education is more important for boys, and (iii) men make better business executives than women. It is heartening to see a shift away from more traditional conceptions of a male-breadwinner and female-homemaker division in gender roles.

Nonetheless, gender stereotypes endure and can prevent both men and women from achieving their full potential. For example, stereotypes about women's aptitude for certain types of work can contribute to lower female representation in male-dominated occupations which tend to be higher paying, such as in STEM careers<sup>16</sup>. While the percentage of women studying in STEM courses increased from 38% in 2017 to 41% in 2019, only 55% of women graduating with STEM degrees or diplomas enter related careers, compared to 70% of men.

Men benefit as much as women when gender stereotypes are recognised and addressed. Men may be equally constrained by societal expectations of how men should behave or perform at home or at work. By recognising everyone's

<sup>16</sup> In 2020, women made up 32% of employed residents in STEM occupations, compared to 49% in other occupations.

individuality and worth, more men and women can be empowered to pursue and realise their aspirations. Men play a key role in encouraging mindset shifts by challenging gender stereotypes and being role models to others, such as taking on a more active role at home and championing more equal opportunities for women at work.

Ultimately, everyone has a role in changing mindsets and forging new societal norms. This will take time. As Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli said, “It would take collective resolve and strong partnerships from the community to shift the

narrative from ‘what was’ and ‘what is’ to ‘what can be.’ Only then, can we truly recognise women’s vast potential, celebrate their contributions, and uplift them, so society can progress together.”

The Conversations have contributed to our public discourse on Singapore women’s development, by raising awareness of the issue on a national scale and generating the momentum for mindset shifts. Beyond this, we must all do our part to continue to identify and overcome persistent stereotypes and unhelpful mindsets, and to be role models to our children in word and in deed.

Men benefit as much as women when gender stereotypes are recognised and addressed. By recognising everyone’s individuality and worth, more men and women can be empowered to pursue and realise their aspirations.

## Existing Efforts to Encourage Mindset Shifts

A summary of existing efforts is below (see [Annex C](#) for more details).

### INCULCATING VALUES AND ADDRESSING GENDER STEREOTYPES THROUGH EDUCATION

#### School curriculum

Both genders are given balanced representation and gender stereotypes are addressed across subjects; in Character and Citizenship Education (CCE), students are taught the importance of not stereotyping, learn to appreciate one’s unique qualities, strengths and talents, and that respect should be accorded to all, regardless of gender

#### Fostering a culture of respect in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)

Various opportunities, such as classroom modules and dialogues, for students to discuss and address gender stereotypes; all IHLs will roll out compulsory modules on respect and appropriate behaviour for all students by mid-2022

#### Education and Career Guidance (ECG)

Students are encouraged to explore a variety of education and career pathways such as through industry internships and career fairs; ECG counsellors counter gender stereotypes during guidance sessions

## EXAMPLES OF GROUND-UP INITIATIVES AND COMMUNITY EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE MINDSET SHIFTS

### Families for Life (FFL)

Promotes active fatherhood, shared parenting and household responsibilities through campaigns and programmes, including outreach to schools with Centre for Fathering to shift societal mindsets towards more active and involved fathering. FFL volunteers help encourage the involvement and commitment of both genders in the relationship and/or family building

### Centre for Fathering

Conducted online programmes for fathers and children to support families at home during the pandemic; runs fathers' support group

### United Women Singapore's Boys Empowered Programme

Helps boys and young men understand the connection between negative gender stereotypes and perpetration of violence against women; creates safe spaces to unpack notions of masculinity and unlearn harmful associations

## INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS TO ENCOURAGE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN STEM

### SG Women in Tech (SG WiT)

Focuses on women talent in the infocomm workforce; annual SG100WIT list features female role models who have made significant contributions to the infocomm technology industry; SG WiT Corporate Pledge encourages companies to implement concrete measures to attract, retain and develop women staff

### SG Cyber Women

Encourages more women to explore the cybersecurity profession through talks and programmes; SG Cyber Youth provides students with opportunities to explore cybersecurity as a career, and exposure to relevant technical knowledge and soft skills



Women tech leaders at She Loves Tech @ SWITCH 2021  
Credit: SG Women in Tech

## How will we achieve a fairer and more inclusive society?

The Government will build upon current efforts and partner stakeholders and community partners to engender a fairer and more inclusive society for all men and women.

### ACTION 22

## Updated the Women's Charter to better reflect women's equal status as men in marriage

The Women's Charter is a landmark legislation which institutionalised the rights and responsibilities of men and women in marriage since its enactment in 1961. While the Government has progressively updated the Charter, some provisions remain as products of historical legacy and are no longer relevant today. For instance, Part VI of the Charter lists the specific rights and obligations that a married woman has,

such as the right to hold and dispose of property<sup>17</sup>. As there is no doubt that a married woman is and should be the equal of a married man today, not just in specific areas or for specific purposes but as a general principle, there is no need to list the specific rights of women. MSF has amended the Charter to enshrine this principle.



### ACTION 23

## Address mental models arising from societal stereotypes

### Implement Character and Citizenship Education curriculum to address equity of familial roles

In schools, the Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) curriculum emphasises the value each person brings to careers and the family irrespective of gender, and students learn about respect and empathy for others. Students also learn to appreciate that families can be

different, and shared parental roles and familial responsibilities are discussed and mutually agreed upon.

Family Education is a key content area in the refreshed CCE curriculum and has been implemented progressively since 2021:

- a. Scenarios in Family Education lessons illustrate how roles in caregiving, attending to

<sup>17</sup> These provisions were adapted from the UK Married Women's Property Act 1882, which were also adopted by other Commonwealth countries.



household chores and generating income for the family are not tied to gender; and

- b. Beyond Family Education, family contexts and representation of equity of familial roles are also covered across the curriculum, in CCE and various other subjects.

MOE will develop resources for teachers and equip them to better engage students in discussions on these issues and consider the complexities involved, especially when engaging older students.

### **Address gender stereotypes about careers through education**

MOE has strengthened Education and Career Guidance (ECG) – related content in schools to address gender stereotypes of job roles, and these are being progressively implemented in the revised CCE curriculum since 2021. This will be delivered as part of Form Teacher Guidance Period

in primary schools and CCE lessons in secondary schools, addressing equal opportunities for all and challenging gender stereotypes. ECG Counsellors will guide students to recognise how gender stereotypes may limit education or career pathways. MOE has also been increasing the number of ECG Counsellors in secondary schools and junior colleges from 2021.

The IHLs will continue their ongoing efforts to encourage women to enter STEM fields. In March 2021, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) launched the Promotion of Women in Engineering, Research and Science (POWERS) programme. Supported by MOE and NTU's College of Engineering, College of Science, and Graduate College, POWERS aims to recruit and empower women with a long-term goal of increasing gender diversity in STEM careers. About 600 female students have benefitted from the programme thus far, through workshops and seminars that equip them with essential professional and personal skillsets to embark on STEM careers.

These efforts in formal education complement the crucial role that parents have at home, in nurturing their children to look past gender stereotypes and pursue their own goals and aspirations.

### **Work with community partners to change mindsets**

Our community partners have also been crucial in our efforts to change mindsets and overcome gender stereotypes. Their efforts and initiatives to enhance family ties, promote community bonding and equip men and women with skills and resources to fulfil their potential play a key role in realising a fairer and more inclusive society for all men and women. One example is the “Gift to Our Next Generation” social experiment by various community partners and supported by MSF, which aired on free-to-air TV and social media channels in December 2021. The experiment featured how different children reacted to household chores and caregiving duties at home based on their parents’ behaviours at home, highlighting the ripple effects parents’ behaviour have on their children and the importance of role-modelling for future generations. As of February 2022, the video has garnered over 5 million views online and reached 12% of audiences aged 15 years and above on free-to-air TV.



► Our community partners have been crucial in our efforts to change mindsets and overcome gender stereotypes.

**ACTION 24****Develop gender-responsive standards under the Singapore Standardisation Programme**

Standards are an effective way for Singapore companies to maintain consistent quality, build customer trust and access global markets. Standards play an important role in our daily lives, from minimising workplace accidents with health and safety standards, to ensuring that food in Singapore is safe for consumption.

Globally, there is female underrepresentation in standards development. This can lead to unequal consideration of the different needs of men and women in the development of standards, such as in the area of safety for women.

In line with local and international efforts to champion greater gender equality, Enterprise

Singapore and the Singapore Standards Council will develop a new gender strategy in 2022 under the Singapore Standardisation Programme. The strategy aims to improve gender diversity in the standards community, develop guidance documents to support the development of gender-responsive standards, and raise awareness on the contributions of women in standardisation.

Singapore will also contribute and learn best practices from other gender initiatives developed by global standards organisations such as the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission.

**ACTION 25****Dedicate a public garden to honour and celebrate pioneering spirit of Singapore women**

To reflect the enduring importance of Singapore women's development, the Government will work with community partners, such as the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations, and the wider public to design and dedicate a public garden to

honour and celebrate the pioneering spirit and the contributions of Singapore women. The garden will be located at Dhoby Ghaut Green in the heart of the city.

## HEAR IT FROM...



### AFROZE BEGUM BINTE ABDUL MOHAMED

*20s, full-time student at Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT)*

#### **Have you experienced gender stereotypes or unhelpful mindsets before? Why are mindset shifts important in advancing women's development?**

I study in a male-dominated field of Cyber Security. In one of my project groups, my groupmates, who happened to be all males, discouraged my ideas and asked me to do the less technical work. It made me feel unheard despite being knowledgeable. Nonetheless, we met on the middle ground and remained objective to complete the project at hand, while ensuring all of our contributions were recognised. I strongly believe that gender does not define quality and women's voices should be heard. Mindsets can be gradually shifted, ensuring we are not limited by our gender but can live up to our individual potential.

#### **What more do you think the community and youths can do to encourage mindset shifts?**

We need to acknowledge that biased gender standards and preconceived notions still exist in society. Education and positive role modelling are key to understanding and addressing gender stereotypes. Schools can consider ongoing engagements to widen perspectives and inculcate values of equality that empower students. As youths, we should be more aware of these gender stereotypes, e.g. by using social media mindfully.

#### **How will the Conversations / White Paper on Singapore Women's Development help to encourage equality between men and women?**

These Conversations acknowledge that gender imbalance still exists today, and there is a need to address this sooner rather than later. The public's valuable suggestions to support Singapore women's development will take time to implement, but the impact will be felt across generations, workplaces, and other segments of community.



### SAIFUL AMRI AHMAD ELAHI

*40s, quit his job in the creative industry to be a stay-at-home dad, while his wife works to support the family*

#### **What prompted you to become a stay-at-home dad?**

We had always wanted to raise our children on our own, and it was easier for me to stay home due to the nature of my job, and because I have always been hands-on at home. So 7 years ago, when the need arose, I left my job to be a stay-home dad.

#### **What were the challenges you faced, and how did you overcome them?**

Communication is very important to help understand each other, whether it is with your wife or with your friends and family. Even though my wife works, she is always there for me. Her continued presence and support helped me overcome the challenges that I face. Ultimately, I think it is about dollars and 'sense', and acknowledging the time spent at home is also valuable. Staying at home does not make you any less of a man. So if you make this decision, be firm and confident about it.

#### **What advice would you give to fathers considering becoming a stay-at-home dad?**

Never stop communicating with your partner. It is important to understand each other's needs and wants, and to resolve problems together.

## HEAR IT FROM...



### HO SI MIN

30, Tech consultant at iNova Pharmaceuticals and a mother of a young child

#### **How do you and your husband split the caregiving responsibilities?**

My husband will take the morning shift to care for our baby, while I'll take the evening shift after work. We both share the night duties. In the afternoon, my baby will be with my in-laws and helpers. It is a practical arrangement that works well.

#### **What were some challenges that you have encountered in your journey?**

The start of my motherhood journey was definitely tough. Apart from changes to my body, I felt stressed trying to formulate my personal definition of motherhood while being surrounded by traditional expectations of what a mother should be.

#### **How did you overcome these challenges?**

My husband has been very supportive and hands-on from the start. We pick up caregiving duties based on practicality / availability instead of our gender. For example, he would cancel his appointments if I had to attend social events after work. His support gave me the space to be the mother I want to be, and not be trapped in the gender paradigm.

Being part of mummies' communities and women empowerment groups also provided a platform to pick up tips, advice, and share frustrations. The Conversations on Singapore Women's Development also opened my perspectives to challenges other women faced.



### BRYAN TAN

40s, Chief Executive Officer of Centre for Fathering (CFF), Father of 4

#### **What motivated you to be a more active father to your children? How did you overcome the challenges in your journey?**

I was a child of divorce. Around me, I saw how children suffered due to broken marriages, and I really struggled when I had my first two children. I did not know what it meant to be a good father and husband and to support my wife, and I did not want to talk to others as I was afraid of being judged. CFF's programmes and support from Dads for Life's community of fathers helped me gain a renewed mindset towards fatherhood and marriage.

#### **How do you think the community can help better support fathers?**

Some of the challenges faced by fathers are lack of knowledge of being a good father/husband and platforms to connect with other fathers, and social stigma about being vulnerable. It is thus important to facilitate frank conversations amongst fathers to surface these issues explicitly and share experiences and tips. Such efforts can help to engender mindset shifts, and I hope that CFF can continue to play a crucial role towards these efforts.

#### **What do you think fathers can do at home to inculcate the right values and promote mindset shifts in our children?**

Be more involved in our children's lives and model for them what it means to be a good son, man, husband, and father.





# CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

This White Paper encapsulates our shared values of **fairness, equality, respect and solidarity** and sets out concrete action plans that the Government will implement in the coming years.

This White Paper encapsulates our shared values of fairness, equality, respect and solidarity and sets out concrete action plans that the Government will implement in the coming years. We aim to galvanise a collective effort towards a fairer and more inclusive society, where men and women partner each other as equals, and both can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest.

The action plans in the White Paper will be implemented over a ten-year roadmap. The Government will continue to review and enhance measures to support Singapore women in the coming years together with community partners and will conduct a mid-point review in 2027.

The Government appreciates Singaporeans' participation in the Year of Celebrating SG Women throughout 2021. Stories were shared of women who left a legacy and of everyday women who may not always get the limelight, through social media

such as the hashtag #CelebratingSGWomen, news articles, and feature stories. Young adults shared their journey breaking gender stereotypes and their active efforts to support and uplift women through the #MaketheNorm effort. Close to 40 partners across F&B, hospitality, retail, lifestyle and other industries offered promotions in conjunction with the movement, and commemorative items such as masks, tote bags and stamps were launched. The many participants in the Conversations also enriched our understanding as a society of the work that lies ahead.

Everyone has a part to play to build a society for all of us to thrive in. Besides setting out a policy agenda, the Government calls upon all Singaporeans to overcome gender stereotypes in our everyday actions that restrict or limit what women can do or become. Together, we can achieve our vision of a fairer and more inclusive Singapore for future generations of Singaporeans – women and men, girls and boys alike.

“It would take collective resolve and strong partnerships from the community to shift the narrative from ‘what was’ and ‘what is’ to ‘what can be.’ Only then, can we truly recognise women’s vast potential, celebrate their contributions, and uplift them, so society can progress together.”

*Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health*

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6. Girl Guides Singapore
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8. Institute for Human Resource Professionals
9. Law Society (Women in Practice)
10. Lean In Singapore
11. Mums @ Work Singapore
12. Muslim Youth Forum Singapore
13. NTUC U Women and Family
14. NTU-University Scholars Programme
15. NUS Students' Political Association
16. PA Women's Integration Network Council
17. Singapore Association of Social Workers
18. Singapore Computer Society
19. Singapore Corporate Counsel Association
20. Singapore Council of Women's Organisations
21. Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations
22. Singapore Indian Development Association
23. Singapore Khalsa Association
24. Singapore National Employers Federation
25. SMU Apolitical Society
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12. Safe Place
13. Sayoni
14. Singapore Alliance for Women in Ageing
15. Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry
16. Singapore Council of Women's Organisations
17. Student Unions / Leaders
18. Tsao Foundation
19. United Women Singapore

**Annex A –  
Historical  
Perspective on  
Singapore Women’s  
Development**

Singapore women's development over the years can be examined across three themes: (i) legal status, protection, and support for the vulnerable; (ii) education, work and politics; and (iii) role in the family.

## LEGAL STATUS, PROTECTION AND SUPPORT FOR THE VULNERABLE

Prior to the passage of the Women's Charter (WC) in 1961, men and women were unequal partners in marriage. The cultural practice of taking multiple wives, common among some Asian societies then, had also taken hold in Singapore. The Singapore Council of Women was established in 1952 and is best remembered for its campaign throughout the 1950s to abolish polygamy. In 1960, Ms Chan Choy Siong, the leader of the People's Action Party women's league and a pioneering champion for women's rights, made an impassioned speech in support of the WC Bill "to enable women to have their rights safeguarded by legislation, and to give people far-reaching stability in marriages." The efforts of Ms Chan and other female leaders such as Hoe Puay Choo, Sahorah Binte Ahmat and Fung Yin Ching led to the enactment of the WC in 1961. The WC was remarkably progressive for its time and received strong support from the Government at that time, including Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye and Law Minister K. M. Byrne.

Since then, the Government has strengthened legislative protections for Singapore women, to protect them from harms in all spheres of life.

- a. The WC was amended in 1997 to provide greater protection to survivors of family violence, and again in 2011 and 2019 to strengthen the enforcement of maintenance orders for divorcees and increase penalties on human traffickers, respectively.
- b. The 2007 Penal Code Amendment Act made it a crime to procure sexual services from girls under the age of eighteen while the Criminal Law Reform Act 2019 introduced new offences to criminalise various technology-enabled sexual offences, enhanced punishments for perpetrators of intimate partner violence and repealed marital immunity for rape.
- c. The Evidence Act was amended in 2012 to remove a provision which stated that when a man is prosecuted for rape, it may be shown that the alleged rape victim was of generally immoral character. The Evidence Act was amended further in 2018 to prevent the accused from questioning the alleged victim of sexual offences, or adducing evidence, about the alleged victim's physical appearance or sexual behaviour, without permission of the court.
- d. The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) was enacted in 2014 and introduced protections from anti-social and undesirable behaviours such as harassment, stalking, cyber-bullying and falsehoods. POHA was amended in 2019 to further strengthen the range of self-help measures, civil remedies and criminal sanctions available to all victims of harassment and falsehoods, including women.

As a society, we are mindful of vulnerable groups of women, such as single mothers, divorcees, and women from lower income families, who need greater support. The Government and community partners progressively established support systems for vulnerable families, including women. Pioneering social worker Thung Syn Neo led the formation of Family Service Centres in 1978, which are recognised internationally today for their unique model in providing comprehensive support for individuals and families.

Efforts to protect survivors of family violence were also enhanced. The National Family Violence Networking System was established in 1996 to coordinate efforts to tackle family violence, and comprises

Government agencies, the Courts, Social Service Agencies (SSAs) and hospitals. In 1999, an initiative between the Family Court and Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVE) allowed victims to apply for Personal Protection Orders (PPOs) through video-linked services nearer their homes. In February 2020, a multi-stakeholder Taskforce on Family Violence was established to develop a comprehensive understanding of the family violence landscape and bring together various stakeholders to jointly develop recommendations.

## ▶ EDUCATION, WORK AND POLITICS

In the 1950s, few women in Singapore were educated and even fewer were in the labour force. For instance, in 1957, the female literacy rate was 33.6%, less than half that for males. The female labour force participation rate was also much lower than that for males. The Government took early action and made quality education accessible to all children, regardless of their gender or socioeconomic status, so they could fulfil their fullest potential. In 1975, then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said: “Societies which do not educate and use half their potential because they are women are those which will be worse off.” At the time of his remarks, the female share of university enrolment had greatly increased from 28% in 1960 to 43% in 1975. Today, Singapore women are well-educated and highly accomplished. In 2019, 49.7% of residents aged 25 years and over with university qualifications were women.

Gains in education translated to progress in the workplace. In 1957, working women were overrepresented in jobs traditionally regarded as “women’s work” such as domestic service workers. As Singapore’s economy modernised, women also increasingly entered other industries such as manufacturing and assumed professional and technical occupations. In 2007, the Tripartite Workgroup on Enhancing Employment Choices for Women was formed and introduced support measures to help women in entering, remaining in, or returning to the workforce.

With these measures, the employment rate for women between the ages of 25 – 64 years is over 7 in 10 today. As more women made headway into the workplace, our efforts went beyond simply encouraging women to work, to supporting talented women to take on leadership positions in the workplace and beyond. Women leaders have broken glass ceilings through the years, such as Euleen Goh (CEO, Standard Chartered Bank Singapore from 2001 – 2006), Goh Swee Chen (Chairman, Shell Companies in Singapore from 2014 – 2019) and Helen Wong (Group CEO, OCBC Bank since 2021). The share of women on boards of Top 100 listed companies, Statutory Boards and Top 100 Institutions of Public Character (IPCs) have seen improvements over time, standing at 19.7% (as at 1 January 2022), 29.7% and 28.4% (as at end-December 2021), respectively.

Female participation in politics has also improved significantly. Automatic voter registration in 1954 and compulsory voting meant that women have played an equal role in our electoral process since 1959. This translated into greater female representation in Parliament over time. Women occupied only 3 out of 64 seats (5%) in the 1<sup>st</sup> Parliament (1965 – 1968), and there were no elected women Members of Parliament from 1970 – 1984. Today, women occupy 30 out of 103 seats (29.1%) in the 14<sup>th</sup> Parliament, comparable to the OECD average of 30.1% in 2019 and higher than the Inter-Parliamentary Union average of 25.5%. In 2009, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua was appointed as Singapore’s first female Cabinet Minister. Before President Halimah Yacob made history as our first female Head-of-State in 2017, she was also elected as the first female Speaker of Parliament in 2013.



## ROLE IN THE FAMILY

In the early 1950s, family norms in Singapore's largely migrant community tended to include a preference for sons while daughters tended to be married off from as early as ten years of age and did not typically receive an education. Thus, women were generally financially dependent on males in their family who were in turn the breadwinners for their families. In this period, families were considerably larger than they are today, e.g. the total fertility rate stood at 5.76 in 1960. While men worked to earn an income, therefore, women were expected to manage the bulk of childcare and domestic duties. However, after self-governance was achieved in 1959, the advent of measures such as universal education, family planning programmes and initiatives to industrialise the economy meant that many more girls could now receive an education and grow up to enter the workforce.

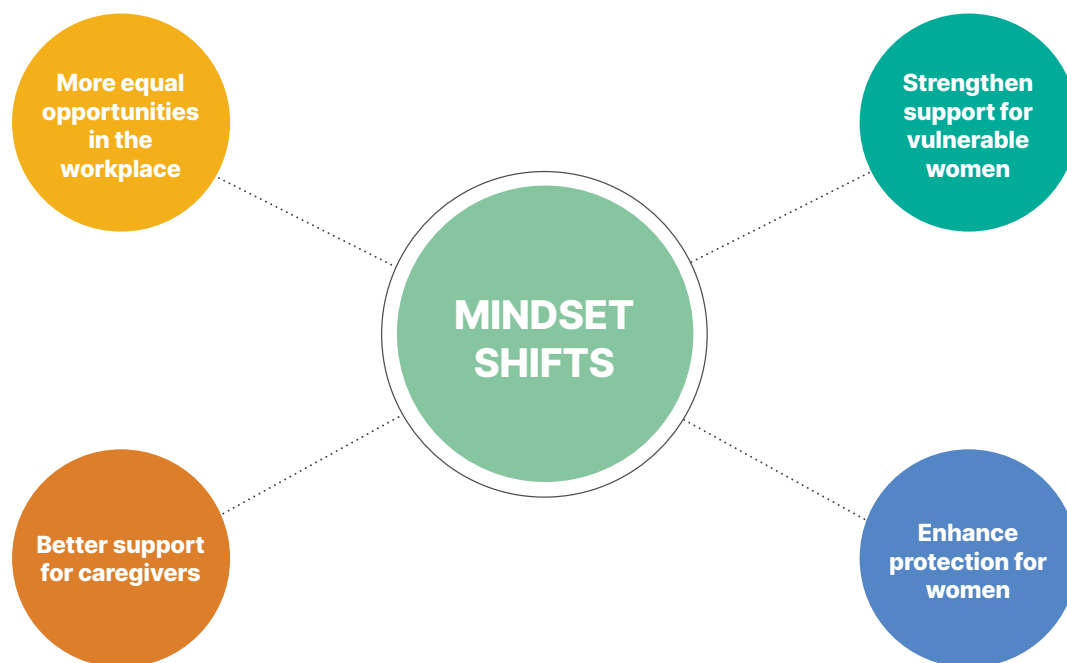
As women entered the workforce, they had to overcome challenges in juggling family responsibilities and career aspirations. To better support Singaporeans in starting and raising families, we implemented a comprehensive suite of measures under the Marriage and Parenthood Package that was launched in 2001 and enhanced over the years. These included initiatives to enhance access to affordable and good quality childcare, and leave provisions for both parents to care for their young children. We also continue to work with tripartite partners to enhance flexibility at the workplace, and actively promote and support more family-friendly workplaces.

A shift in the norms of gender roles would not be possible without active promotion by community partners, such as Families for Life. Community programmes and campaigns have been run to encourage fathers to take on a greater role in caring for and nurturing their children. As a result, fathers are more actively involved in raising their children and taking on their share of household responsibilities.

**Annex B –  
Summary of  
Feedback from  
Conversations**

This summary document reflects the key concerns and aspirations shared at the Conversations, and our shared vision for a fairer and more inclusive society. The feedback received can be categorised into five broad areas:

## OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK THEMES



### MORE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Participants shared their hopes for workplaces where women are empowered and stand a fair chance in fulfilling their career and personal aspirations. They shared concerns about workplace discrimination, lack of female representation in leadership roles, and management of workplace harassment. They exchanged ideas to promote supportive workplaces that enable women to remain in or re-enter the workforce.

Participants discussed:

- a. Promoting fair employment practices.** Gender stereotypes and biases may result in unfair practices in hiring, appraisal, promotion, dismissal or retrenchment, and limit the number of women in leadership and across occupations. Participants shared their hopes for workplaces where all employees, including women, are treated fairly, based on merit. Companies should disallow unfair practices such as discriminating against employees or potential employees based on gender, age, or other characteristics, asking about marital or pregnancy status, and denying career opportunities due to employees' caregiving responsibilities.
- b. Enhancing support for women to remain in or re-enter the workforce.** Caregivers, who are primarily women, struggle to achieve work-life harmony due to the dual demands of work and



caregiving responsibilities. Caregivers fear repercussions on their careers if they request for flexible work arrangements (FWAs) or take time off work due to caregiving responsibilities. To address this, participants suggested (i) increasing the availability of FWAs to help women pursue their career aspirations while juggling caregiving responsibilities; (ii) adopting supportive and family-friendly workplace culture and measures; (iii) providing structured programmes to help bridge skills gaps, and (iv) support networks to help women reintegrate into the workforce.

- c. Increasing female representation in leadership roles, on boards, and in various occupations, to better harness female talent.** Women with equal capabilities are currently not well-represented in leadership positions, on boards, and in male-dominated occupations, such as in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) occupations. Participants shared that the glass ceiling is often perpetuated by gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination, and shared their hopes for it to be broken through enhanced efforts like profiling of role models, mentoring, networking, and leadership development opportunities. Some participants suggested setting targets or quotas to improve female representation, but others were concerned that doing so could inadvertently lead to women being appointed for the sake of meeting targets rather than based on merit. Others highlighted the need to help encourage greater take-up of STEM courses by female students, by providing more access to career information and professionals in the field.

## QUOTES FROM CITIZENS:

*“Job interviews often raise the question of whether women interviewees / candidates plan to get pregnant or start families. Job opportunities should not be related to a woman’s personal priorities and issues.”*

*“More re-entry programmes for women who were out of the workforce due to family responsibilities, with flexibility to make it work for them. Organisations need to highlight that there need not be a trade-off between career progression and family lives.”*

*“Women in leadership roles can mentor younger women in their careers. This will groom and inspire the next generation of women leaders.”*

## BETTER SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

Participants advocated for better support for caregivers. They shared their aspirations for a society where men play a more equal role in household and caregiving responsibilities. Such tasks are physically and emotionally taxing, and women often shoulder a heavier load, unequally affecting their careers compared to men.

Participants discussed:

- a. Recognising caregiving as a valuable form of contribution to society.** Caregivers should be appreciated and respected for their choices and contribution. Women’s work at home should be given greater recognition and accorded greater value. Caregivers bear significant physical, socio-emotional, and financial costs and should be recognised for their efforts.

- b. Encouraging a more equal share of household and caregiving duties between men and women.** Women are often expected to bear the brunt of caregiving. Promoting a workplace and societal culture that encourages fathers to take paternity leave and utilise FWAs, can allow men to play a more active role at home.
- c. Strengthening community-based support initiatives for caregivers.** This can include sharing of resources, emotional support, and tapping on community networks for childminding or caregiving support (e.g. through peer support networks).
- d. Making resources and touchpoints for help more accessible, so that caregivers can navigate and seek support more easily.** These include increasing awareness of touchpoints and resources available (e.g. enhancing public awareness on financial subsidies, caregiving and mental health resources) and expanding respite care options for caregivers of seniors (e.g. more home-based or ad-hoc respite).
- e. More financial support.** Caregivers who are unable to work, especially from low-income households, may require additional support to meet their needs, including financial security at old age, caregiving expenses, etc. These include more support to help defray caregiving costs, especially for low-income families.

## QUOTES FROM CITIZENS:

*“In an ageing society, [we need to] balance multiple roles and hence a more flexible/ understanding workplace is important.”*

*“Let’s create a ground-up community-focused network to share information and provide peer support to one another, so that caregivers feel less alone.”*

*“Even with more flexible working arrangements for fathers, mindsets have to change about caregiving responsibilities. Otherwise, fathers will still not make use of their flexible arrangements and leave provisions and most of the caregiving still falls on Mom’s shoulders.”*

## ENHANCE PROTECTION OF WOMEN

Another key feedback area raised was enhancing the protection of women against sexual and hurt offences, including family violence. Participants shared their hopes for a society where women feel safe and respected in all aspects of life.

Participants discussed:

- a. Strengthening education on respect and appropriate behaviour at home and in schools.** The value of respect should be taught from young, and role modelled by parents, teachers and their community. Education efforts should highlight building healthy relationships, with a greater focus on topics like personal safety, protection of oneself from sexual exploitation and abuse, and help-seeking.
- b. Improving support for victims of sexual and hurt offences.** Participants called for greater awareness of existing laws and measures to protect victims, and for society to move away from

victim blaming. More open and respectful societal attitudes can encourage victims to seek help and report offences, without feeling like they will be judged or disbelieved. Support systems for victims can be strengthened and adequate penalties should be meted out to perpetrators.

- c. Enhancing efforts to tackle family violence.** Some survivors do not seek help, and witnesses may refrain from intervening as they may view family violence as a personal, domestic matter. Greater public education can help to strengthen awareness of family violence. Communities should play their part in recognising tell-tale signs and supporting affected families. Perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions and receive the necessary support to break the cycle of violence.
- d. Putting in place clearer workplace policies to deter and manage workplace harassment.** There is a lack of awareness of the definition of workplace harassment. Victims may not know or feel safe to report workplace harassment cases, due to fear of losing their jobs. Possible ways to address these concerns include implementing grievance handling policies at the workplace, including for harassment, and increasing awareness of channels for reporting to detect and manage workplace harassment cases.
- e. Tackling online harms.** Participants suggested enhancing education efforts on issues such as online harassment, sexual grooming and pornography addiction, and their impact on victims. Strengthening reporting and support channels for online harms, dealing justly with such offences, and increasing awareness and accessibility of resources, will better support victims.
- f. Fostering a safer sports environment to protect athletes.** Participants highlighted the need to raise awareness of cases of misconduct in sports. They suggested developing measures to provide for athletes' safety, such as regulating and certifying coaches, educating parents and athletes on unsafe behaviours, and establishing a reporting channel that will investigate such cases without penalising the athletes.

## QUOTES FROM CITIZENS:

*"... punishment for the offence needs to be heavy and fair, based on the offence and effect on victims."*

*"Galvanise community to keep a look-out e.g. equipping the bystanders to respond to [sexual harassment/family violence] ... empowering families and victims [to seek help]."*

*"The situation for dealing with online sexual harassment would be more complex than expected, as the offenders are often anonymous. It is also important to address the multifaceted aspects and parties (i.e. perpetrator, victim, parents, community) involved in combatting sexual misconduct."*

## STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN

Participants shared their hopes for a society that demonstrates greater care and support for vulnerable women groups (e.g. single mothers, divorcees, women from lower income families), who often face more financial and emotional stressors.

Participants discussed:

- a. Strengthening support systems.** Participants discussed that vulnerable women often lacked strong support systems in their families and communities to assist them in meeting practical needs such

as housing and childcare arrangements. Community-based support networks can be a channel for useful information, to develop work and life skills, as well as to provide practical and emotional support.

- b. Increasing awareness of available resources, and streamlining resources for ease of access.** Participants suggested for more easy-access touch points, such as a one-stop platform to access resources. This will allow for greater ease in navigating resources, assuring vulnerable women that help is available to better support them in their journey.
- c. Enhancing support for women undergoing divorce, and their children.** Acrimonious and lengthy divorces are emotionally draining for families. Difficulties in having access to children due to conflictual relationships with ex-spouses, can be stressful for both parents and children. Divorced women often face housing and financial challenges as well. Improving access to marital counselling and mediation can help to encourage marital reconciliation, or better prepare divorcing couples for life after divorce.

## QUOTES FROM CITIZENS:

*“More support for sole caregivers [divorcees, single parents] of young children and elderly parents.”*

*“More financial support... for women to support their dependents.”*

*... to have bigger kampong to provide support especially when there are many stressors that make single women and the elderly vulnerable to mental illnesses.”*

## MINDSET SHIFTS

Participants identified mindset shifts in society as the foundational factor undergirding the progress of Singapore women. While Singapore has achieved good progress in women’s development, traditional gender stereotypes hinder women’s further advancement.

Participants shared their aspirations for women to have real choices in balancing career and family goals, and succeed in their careers across all industries and positions, without being stereotyped or hampered by traditional societal expectations. Women should also believe that they can achieve their aspirations and not be limited by mindsets.

Participants discussed:

- a. Inculcating values of respect and equality between women and men from a young age.** This can be done through role-modelling by parents at home and in schools to address gender stereotypes.
- b. Shifting mindsets across whole-of-society.** All of us, including family members, teachers, colleagues, employers, and others in the community, play an important role in being positive role models, challenging gender stereotypes and building bridges to improve understanding of one another. We should aim for greater fairness in access to opportunities, based on equal roles, responsibilities and contribution between men and women. We should strengthen inclusivity, where women from different segments of society are embraced and supported. We should aspire towards a spirit of partnership, where everyone, including men and women, bands together and supports one another to advance Singapore women’s development.

- c. **Men have an important role to play.** Men can foster mindset shifts in other men and demonstrate practical support for women, such as taking on a more active role within their own homes, and championing more equal opportunities in the workplace for women.

## QUOTES FROM CITIZENS:

*“The whole society needs to come together for this to be effective, including schools and families. There is a need to think of how the whole society perceives a woman’s contributions, role and effectiveness.”*

*“Men need to step up as allies and support women in the effort towards greater equality and provide support with resources that men have greater access to.”*

*“Traditional mindsets have passed through so many generations and are difficult to change. We need to educate the younger generation. For example, my two young boys do household chores, help out in the kitchen.”*

**Annex C –**  
**Existing Efforts to**  
**Support Women**

## ▶ EXISTING EFFORTS TO PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

### **Strengthen workplace fairness**

All forms of workplace discrimination, including against women, are not tolerated in Singapore. The Government's approach to tackle workplace discrimination is summarised below.

#### **Enforcement**

The Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (TGFEP) require all employers to treat all employees and jobseekers based on merit, regardless of attributes such as their gender, marital status or family responsibilities. Firm enforcement action is taken against employers found to have breached the Guidelines. These enforcement measures were enhanced in 2020, with suspension of work pass privileges extended to include renewals in addition to new applications, and the minimum suspension period doubled from 6 to 12 months.

There are also provisions under the Employment Act that protect all employees, including women, from wrongful dismissal, including on discriminatory grounds (e.g. due to pregnancy). If a pregnant employee is retrenched or wrongfully dismissed, her employer must still pay the maternity benefits she would have been eligible for. Any dismissal while an employee is on maternity leave is illegal.

#### **Education**

As workplace discrimination is at its root a mindset issue, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) work with tripartite partners and community stakeholders to undertake educational and promotional efforts to correct gender stereotypes and promote fair employment practices. TAFEP also assists employers to implement fair and progressive practices at their workplaces.

### **Enable more women to participate more fully in the workplace**

#### ***Efforts to entrench flexible work arrangements and work-life support as a workplace norm***

The Government promotes and supports the adoption of flexible work arrangements (FWAs) and other work-life strategies to help workers remain in the workforce while managing their personal needs.

#### **Tripartite Advisory and Standards**

Today, MOM and tripartite partners take an educational and enabling approach to help employers to appreciate the importance of FWAs, and equip them with the know-how to implement them effectively. The Tripartite Advisory on FWAs provides guidance to companies on how to implement FWAs at their workplaces, including practical steps on how employees could request for and use FWAs responsibly, and how supervisors should fairly consider FWA requests and manage employees on FWAs. The Tripartite Standards recognise progressive employers who put in place recommended practices in various employment areas. The Tripartite Standard on FWAs introduced in 2017 set out that employers should offer FWAs, consider and respond to employees' request for FWAs in a timely manner and train

supervisors to objectively evaluate FWA applications and appraise employees on FWAs fairly. The Tripartite Standard on Unpaid Leave for Unexpected Care Needs was introduced in 2018 to recognise employers who offer unpaid leave to support employees' caregiving needs. The Tripartite Standard on Work-Life Harmony introduced in 2021 set out that employers should offer work-life support, including FWAs, enhanced leave provisions and employee support schemes. As of end-December 2021, adopters of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs (introduced in October 2017) hire 882,000 employees, adopters of the Tripartite Standard on Unpaid Leave for Unexpected Care Needs (introduced in March 2018) hire 371,000 employees, and adopters of the Tripartite Standard on Work-Life Harmony (introduced in April 2021) hire 216,000 employees.

### **Ground-up initiatives**

MOM seeks to continue to rally Singaporeans to take corporate, communal and personal ownership towards improving work-life harmony in Singapore. In 2019, a Citizens' Panel on Work-Life Harmony was convened to develop recommendations to improve work-life harmony in Singapore. Key recommendations include the launch of the Tripartite Standard on Work-Life Harmony in April 2021, the development of sector-specific resources to guide employers in implementing FWAs and growing a community of Work-Life Ambassadors to advocate and support the implementation of work-life practices amongst fellow employers, employees and HR professionals.

In February 2021, tripartite partners jointly launched an Alliance for Action (AfA) on Work-Life Harmony to build a community of stakeholders to share best practices and co-create initiatives to strengthen work-life harmony in Singapore. From March – September 2021, the AfA ran five sessions to facilitate sharing and discussion on best work-life practices. This included sector-specific Communities of Practice (CoPs) to provide tailored guidance and resources to companies on implementing work-life harmony practices. The CoPs run for the Food Services, Finance and Manufacturing sectors were well attended by over 900 employers, employees and HR professionals. The AfA also developed a wide range of resources to promote and support the implementation of work-life practices, including self-diagnostic tools, guides, policy templates and publicity materials.

### ***Leave provisions and support for greater shared parental responsibility***

The Government supports greater shared responsibility between parents in caring for their children, and works with stakeholders such as employers and community partners to do so.

### **Enhanced leave provisions**

The Government has enhanced parental leave provisions over the years to support parents in managing their work and family responsibilities, and in particular fathers in playing a bigger role in raising their children. Today, working couples can take up to 22 weeks of leave in their child's first year<sup>1</sup>. Of these, fathers can take 2 weeks of paid paternity leave and share up to 4 weeks of their wife's maternity leave. Including paid childcare leave and unpaid infant care leave provisions, fathers can take up to 8 weeks of leave to care for their wives and their children in their child's first year. The proportion of fathers using their paternity leave has steadily increased from 47% in 2016 to 55% in 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> This comprises: (a) 16 weeks of maternity leave, (b) 2 weeks of paternity leave, (c) 6 days of paid childcare leave per parent, and (d) 6 days of unpaid infant care leave per parent.



## **Raising awareness**

The Government works closely with community partners such as Families for Life and Centre for Fathering (which drives the Dads for Life movement) to promote active fatherhood and shared parenting responsibilities. The Government also works with tripartite partners to encourage employers to foster more family-friendly workplaces, where progressive practices are implemented, and supervisors and co-workers are understanding of employees' caregiving responsibilities.

## **Existing employment facilitation programmes and services for women seeking to return to work**

A range of employment facilitation programmes and services is provided to help individuals, including women, return to the workforce.

### **Programmes to help jobseekers secure job matches**

Workforce Singapore's (WSG) broad-based employment facilitation programmes and services and SkillsFuture Singapore's (SSG) training programmes provide support to all jobseekers, including women looking to return to the workforce after a period of absence, depending on their specific needs. From 2019 – 2021, WSG collectively placed more than 68,000 women across its programmes and services.

- a. This includes Career Trial where there is a trial period for the employer and jobseeker of up to three months to assess job fit, considering factors such as the occupation, industry and jobseeker profile, with an allowance provided by Government during the trial.
- b. Jobseekers who may require a skill top-up can tap on Career Conversion Programmes (CCPs). CCPs provide training and salary support to employers who hire and reskill mid-career jobseekers for new occupations. Long-term unemployed and mature jobseekers (including women looking to return to the workforce) are eligible for higher support. Jobseekers looking to upgrade and acquire new skills and knowledge in information and communications technology (ICT) can also tap on specialised programmes such as the Infocomm and Media Development Authority's (IMDA) TechSkills Accelerator (TeSA) initiative. Through TeSA, jobseekers can access ICT opportunities across the economy, by undergoing training in either tech-heavy areas such as Data Science and Cybersecurity, or tech-lite areas such as Systems Analyst and Digital Marketing.
- c. Under SkillsFuture, individuals can also tap on the wide range of Continuing Education and Training courses to acquire new skills and/or deepen their skills to enhance their employability. These courses are supported at up to 90% of course fees, and Singapore citizens aged 25 and above can use their SkillsFuture Credit (including a one-off top-up of \$500 in October 2020) to defray out-of-pocket course fees.

### **Employment facilitation services for jobseekers**

Jobseekers who need assistance can approach WSG and NTUC's Employment and Employability Institute, and any of the 24 SGUnited Jobs and Skills Centres in HDB estates. Jobseekers can also tap on the MyCareersFuture portal to search for jobs that best suit their skillsets. Mature, long-term unemployed, or persons with disabilities can be assisted by SGUnited Jobs and Skills Placement Partners, to explore job opportunities.

### **Enhanced support during COVID-19**

The Government rolled out additional measures such as the Jobs Support Scheme and the SGUnited Jobs and Skills package to help Singaporeans stay in or find employment through the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures have helped to stabilise the employment rate for female residents aged 25 – 64 at 73% in 2020, which increased to 75% in 2021 as the economy recovers.

### ***Facilitate greater women’s representation in leadership roles***

A multi-stakeholder approach is adopted to address the root causes of low female representation in leadership positions.

### **Council for Board Diversity**

The Council for Board Diversity (CBD), formed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) in 2019, works with the private, public and people sectors to jointly promote and achieve sustained increases in women’s representation on the boards of the top 100 SGX-listed companies, Statutory Boards and Top 100 Institutions of Public Character (IPCs). The Government works with the CBD to raise public awareness of the importance of board diversity and to work with stakeholders to develop a pipeline of board-ready women. The percentage of women on boards of Top 100 listed companies, Statutory Boards and Top 100 IPCs have improved over time, standing at 19.7% (as at 1 January 2022), 29.7% and 28.4% (as at end-December 2021), respectively.

### **Code of Corporate Governance/SGX Listing Rules:**

The Code of Corporate Governance (“CG Code”) applies to listed companies in Singapore on a comply-or-explain basis. It was enhanced in 2018 to require companies to disclose in their annual report, the company’s board diversity policy and progress made towards implementing the policy. As a good practice, companies are further encouraged to adopt the Practice Guidance to the CG Code, to include qualitative and measurable objectives in their board diversity policy where appropriate. The SGX Listing Rules require companies to disclose their board diversity policy and progress achieved in gender, skill, experience, and other relevant aspects of diversity.

## **EXISTING EFFORTS TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS**

### **Support for caregivers of seniors**

#### ***Caregiver Support Action Plan***

The Caregiver Support Action Plan (CSAP) was launched in 2019 to strengthen support for caregivers to enable seniors to age well in the community. In addition to the initiatives under CSAP, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and partner agencies provide support to caregivers of seniors through:

#### **Empowerment**

The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) has worked with community partners to set up caregiver support networks to provide socio-emotional support for caregivers. This builds on existing measures to support families in their caregiving duties, such as the Caregivers Training Grant (CTG) and the ElderCarer Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) scheme. AIC also set up caregiver community outreach

teams to support the mental health needs of vulnerable caregivers. As of May 2021, a total of five caregiver community outreach and seven caregiver support networks have been set up, with over 1,000 caregivers supported through these programmes. AIC and SG Enable have also synergised efforts in the areas of equipping and enabling caregivers as well as improving caregiver support pathways.

Since 2019, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and Montfort Care have been piloting the Caregiver Community Lab in two housing estates, Radin Mas and Tanjong Pagar, to deep dive into the needs of caregivers, mobilise local community assets, and improve synergy between local stakeholders.

### **Respite Care**

There are various short-term and longer-term respite care options for caregivers today, through over 20 eldercare centres and over 40 nursing homes across Singapore. In 2019, MOH launched pilots for home-based respite care for home palliative care patients and night respite care to offer more options for seniors and caregivers. The “Go Respite” initiative was also piloted to shorten activation times to access respite care. As of June 2021, over 2,000 caregivers have benefitted from respite services.

### **Financial Support**

To complement existing financial support for long-term care, such as subsidies and long-term care insurance schemes, MOH launched the Home Caregiving Grant (HCG) in October 2019. The HCG provides care recipients from qualifying households in the community with at least moderate permanent disability a monthly cash grant of \$200 to defray caregiving costs. As of June 2021, more than 34,000 beneficiaries have received the HCG. For seniors with mobility and care needs, the Seniors’ Mobility and Enabling Fund (SMF) provides subsidies to defray costs of assistive devices (e.g. mobility aids) and home healthcare items (e.g. milk feeds).

### **Care Navigation**

AIC has expanded the number of AIC Links to improve access to physical touchpoints for information and referral services. MOH launched the My Legacy website, to provide information and services related to the end-of-life journey (e.g. Lasting Power of Attorney, Advance Care Planning).

## **Support for women and their children**

### ***Supporting mothers through the pregnancy journey***

A multi-pronged approach is adopted to equip parents and parents-to-be with the knowledge and skills on maintaining healthy pregnancies and keeping their children healthy during their early development years. This includes establishing guidelines, health education and promotion programmes and community initiatives, as well as putting in place preventive health services in collaboration with healthcare institutions and community partners. Examples include the following:

- Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) screening is offered to all pregnant women at the public hospitals. Women diagnosed with GDM can be referred by their doctors to hospital-organised workshops that will equip them with the necessary knowledge to manage their condition.
- The KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital (KKH) and National University Hospital (NUH) routinely offer antenatal and postnatal mental health screening and intervention programmes to support pregnant women with signs of mental distress.

- Educational resources produced by the Health Promotion Board are also publicly available to better equip young parents on the pregnancy and parenthood journey. This includes online materials and guidebooks on various topics such as nutritional needs and dietary tips for infants and young children, and benefits of breastfeeding.

### ***Enhancing access to affordable and quality preschools***

Measures have been rolled out to enhance the accessibility, affordability, and quality of early childhood services, to support young families and provide a good start for every child.

**Accessibility:** The Early Childhood Education Agency (ECDA) has doubled the number of full-day preschool places from around 90,000 in 2012 to around 200,000 today, and will develop about 10,000 more places by 2023 to meet growing demand.

**Affordability:** The Government has made preschool services more affordable for families. Fees at Government-supported preschools are kept affordable through fee caps. All Singapore citizen children receive a universal Basic Subsidy of up to \$300 and \$600 per month for child and infant care respectively. Working families may also be eligible for a means-tested Additional Subsidy. In January 2020, the income ceiling for means-tested preschool subsidies was raised to \$12,000 to enable more families to benefit, and subsidies were increased across all eligible income tiers. As a result, about 6 in 10 Singapore citizen children enrolled in full-day childcare today receive means-tested subsidies.

Today, low-income families can pay as little as \$3 a month for full-day childcare at government-supported preschools. Working families earning \$5,000 per month pay \$130 per month for full-day childcare at an Anchor Operator preschool, compared to up to \$370 per month prior to the subsidy enhancements in January 2020. Overall, around 78,000 children benefit from means-tested preschool subsidies, up from around 48,000 in 2019.

## **Support for caregivers of persons with disabilities, and children with developmental needs**

### ***Enabling Masterplans***

Enabling Masterplans are roadmaps for the Government and the community to work together to support persons with disabilities. Since 2007, the Government has progressively put in place more support for persons with disabilities at every stage of their lives, and to smoothen the transition between life stages, such as from one's schooling years into the workforce. Under the Third Enabling Masterplan (2017 – 2021), new early intervention (EI) programmes were introduced and special education (SPED) school fees were made more affordable. The Government also introduced enhanced measures to support the employment of persons with disabilities, improve access to healthcare and the built environment, and strengthen caregiver support, digital inclusion, and inclusion in leisure and recreation. A Steering Committee has been convened to develop the next Enabling Masterplan for 2022 – 2030<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Support for caregivers of persons with disabilities***

Caregivers of persons with disabilities and children with developmental needs, many of whom are

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<sup>2</sup> The 27-member Steering Committee comprises members from the people, private and public sectors, including persons with disabilities and caregivers, and has been engaging persons with disabilities, caregivers, disability organisations, SSAs, members of the public and interested stakeholders, to gather feedback.

women, can find support groups through SG Enable's Enabling Guide. MSF has launched a Disability Case Management Programme pilot with the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) to further strengthen support for persons with disabilities with high support needs and their caregivers. Under the pilot, a multi-disciplinary team of social workers and allied health professionals will help each family better access the ecosystem of support services and coordinate the interventions that the family requires.

### ***Support for caregivers of children with developmental needs***

Measures have been implemented to provide better support for families with young children with developmental needs, where the majority of caregivers are women.

Children under the age of 7 with developmental needs can receive intervention through various EI programmes. These include the Development Support – Learning Support (DS-LS) and Development Support Plus (DS-Plus) programmes in preschools for children who require low levels of EI support; and the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) at EI centres for children who require medium to high levels of EI support. EI centres also provide caregiver engagement and training under EIPIC, to equip caregivers with the skills and knowledge to support their children at home. In 2019, we enhanced EI means-tested subsidies and broadened the income criteria so that more families qualify. Out-of-pocket expenses for EI services were lowered by 30% to 70% on average depending on the EI programme.

## **Measures to help caregivers balance work and family responsibilities**

Domestic help can provide valuable support in managing household and caregiving needs, thus enabling caregivers to better balance their work and family responsibilities. Measures are in place to support households that wish to hire migrant domestic workers (MDWs) and support companies that provide household services.

### ***MDW concessionary levy***

MDW employers enjoy a concessionary MDW levy of \$60 per month if they live with any eligible person who is a Singapore citizen:

- Young child below 16 years old
- Elderly person who is at least 67 years old
- Person with disabilities, requiring help with at least one activity of daily living

### ***Levy relief for income tax***

The Foreign Domestic Worker Levy Relief is given to married women and divorcees/widows with school-going children, to encourage them to stay in the workforce. The tax relief amount is up to twice the total levy paid in the previous year for one MDW. Relief is automatically granted in subsequent tax assessment years after the initial application.

## Household Services Scheme

To give households more options to meet their need for domestic services, the commercial Household Services Scheme (HSS) was introduced in 2017 to allow eligible companies to hire more migrant workers to provide part-time home cleaning services. The number of HSS companies has expanded from 15 in 2017 to 103 in March 2022, serving more than 16,000 households. The scope of HSS services was expanded since September 2021 to include grocery-shopping, car-washing and pet-sitting.

## Measures to help caregivers achieve retirement adequacy

Measures have been introduced and enhanced in recent years to help all Singaporeans build sufficient savings for retirement, including caregivers:

- To support working caregivers to earn more and save more, the Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution rates for those aged above 55 – 70 has been raised from 1 January 2022 and will be increased gradually over this decade, while the Retirement age and Re-employment age (RA/REA) will also be gradually raised. Lower-wage workers also benefit from cash and CPF top-ups of up to \$4,000 per year through the Workfare Income Supplement scheme and may also tap on the Workfare Skills Support scheme for upskilling and training support. From 2023, Workfare payouts will be increased for all recipients, and will also be extended to younger lower-wage workers starting from age 30.
- To accumulate more CPF savings beyond mandatory contributions, incentives are provided for CPF members to top up their and their loved ones' CPF in cash through the **Retirement Sum Topping-Up (RSTU) scheme**. To help families better support their caregivers, the Government has enhanced the RSTU tax relief cap from \$7,000 (for both top-ups to self and loved ones) to \$8,000 from 1 January 2022. From 2018 – 2020, 7 in 10 seniors who received CPF top-ups (cash and CPF transfers) were women, including many caregivers. We have also encouraged and made it easier for members to transfer their CPF savings to their spouses, parents and grandparents.
- The **Matched Retirement Savings Scheme (MRSS)**, launched in 2021, helps to boost the retirement savings of older Singapore citizens, including caregivers, who have yet to accumulate the current Basic Retirement Sum. The Government will match every dollar of cash top-up made to eligible members, up to a cap of \$600 each year. About one-third of those eligible for MRSS are inactive CPF contributors (likely to be full-time caregivers), with 2.5 times as many women as men among them. \$68 million in MRSS grants were given to 117,000 members for top-ups received in 2021.
- The **Silver Support (SS) scheme**, enhanced in 2021, provides seniors who had lower incomes during their working years and who now have lower retirement savings, with quarterly payouts of up to \$900. About two-thirds of the SS recipients are women, including many caregivers who were not able to work much when they were younger.
- Housing monetisation schemes, such as the **Lease Buyback Scheme (LBS)** and **Silver Housing Bonus (SHB)**, help older Singaporeans unlock their housing equity to supplement their retirement income. LBS allows members to sell a part of their flat lease in exchange for a stream of monthly income and provides a cash bonus of up to \$30,000. SHB provides members with a cash bonus of up to \$30,000 when they sell their current flat and buy a 3-room or smaller flat, and top up their proceeds from right-sizing into their CPF Retirement Account.

- MoneySense has financial planning resources made available for all Singaporeans, including women, at various life-stages. Free workshops, toolkits and digital tools such as MyMoneySense make it easy for women to access financial knowledge and work towards their own retirement adequacy.

## EXISTING EFFORTS IN PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AND HARM

### **Nurturing healthy mindsets and value of respect through education**

Through the education system, we inculcate the value of respect and appropriate behaviour in students from a young age. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has also put in place measures to promote a safe learning environment for all students.

#### *Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in schools*

As part of Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in schools, MOE Sexuality Education provides students with accurate and developmentally-appropriate information and skills, to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions at different stages of their lives. Students are taught in an age-appropriate manner about personal safety and how to recognise sexual abuse and harassment. Students also learn to look out for one another and seek help from trusted adults, such as their parents, teachers and school counsellors.

- a. In primary schools, from Primary 1, students learn about personal safety and protection from abuse, e.g. differentiating good touch from bad touch. They also learn skills to protect themselves in physical and online spaces, and are taught that they are protected by the law.
- b. In a Primary 5 lesson on sexual abuse, students are guided through different scenarios on what is sexual abuse, and how to seek help from a trusted adult.
- c. In secondary schools and at the pre-university level, students discuss the importance of respecting boundaries of self and others, and learn to identify risks and stand up to peer pressure. Lessons provide opportunities for students to practise negotiating personal boundaries, and the social-emotional and legal consequences if they overstep these boundaries.

The refreshed CCE curriculum (progressively implemented since 2021) includes a greater emphasis on moral values, cyber wellness and the importance of respecting personal boundaries online and in-person. Students learn how to protect themselves against cyber flashing and voyeurism, on top of recognising inappropriate behaviour, online sexual grooming and abuse, and understanding the social-emotional and legal consequences of such behaviours. Students also learn about the influence of media and pornography on sexuality and relationships, including the risks and consequences of inappropriate self-disclosure, and the legal implications of possessing and/or distributing pornographic materials. The curriculum also covers the importance of responsible decision-making grounded in sound values, understanding when to seek support for mental health, and having a strong peer support system.

## *Measures to address sexual misconduct in schools and Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)*

### **Measures in schools**

In schools, victims of sexual misconduct receive timely support with empathy and sensitivity. School counsellors are equipped with skills to assess the psycho-emotional state of the victims, and to provide the appropriate interventions or referrals required.

### **Measures in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs)**

The IHLs have enhanced measures to tackle sexual misconduct across several areas, and regularly review and strengthen these measures in consultation with their community, MOE, and other relevant agencies.

- a. **Education and Training** e.g. Strengthened efforts to educate/ train both students and staff on respect and appropriate behaviour;
- b. **Campus Safety and Security** e.g. Enhanced campus infrastructure and stepped up campus-wide patrols to deter would-be offenders and promote a safe campus environment for all;
- c. **Victim Support** e.g. issuance of No Contact Orders (NCOs) to protect victims during investigation process; enhanced training for first-responders and front-line staff; 24-hour helplines, victim care units, and deployment of care support officers; and
- d. **Discipline and Sanctions** e.g. significantly tightened disciplinary frameworks to impose tougher penalties for sexual misconduct, including possible expulsion even for first-time offenders. This is paired with counselling support and rehabilitation to reduce recidivism and support offenders' eventual return to studies.

## **Protection against sexual and hurt offences**

The Government takes a tough stance against sexual and hurt offences. Our laws and policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and relevant, and continue to reflect the values of society. The Government has strengthened protection against sexual and hurt offences, and made it easier for victim-survivors to report these offences.

### *Legislation*

- The Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) was first enacted in 2014 and introduced a range of civil remedies and criminal sanctions to enhance protections from anti-social and undesirable behaviours such as harassment and stalking.
- In 2018, the Criminal Procedure Code and Evidence Act were amended to better protect and support victims of sexual offences during the court process.
- In 2019, the Penal Code was amended to (i) provide for enhanced penalties for those who commit sexual and hurt offences against vulnerable victims and victims in an intimate or close relationship with the offender; (ii) better protect minors from sexual exploitation; (iii) introduce offences to tackle emerging crime trends such as technology-facilitated sexual offences; and (iv) fully repeal marital immunity for rape.
- In 2019, POHA was amended to enhance protection of victims of harassment. Enhanced penalties



apply where offences are committed against victims in an intimate relationship with the offender. The civil remedies available under POHA were strengthened. A specialist Protection from Harassment Court, which has oversight over all criminal and civil matters under POHA, was also established.

### *Support for victim-survivors of sexual and hurt offences*

- **Criminal justice system.** Police officers are trained to be sensitive in their interactions with victims. Under the Police Victim Care Cadre programme, trained volunteers with relevant qualifications and experience in psychology, counselling or social work provide emotional support to victims throughout the criminal justice process. All appointed Judges and Judicial Officers also undergo gender-sensitivity training for cases involving violence against women, whether in the context of an intimate relationship or in the family.
- **OneSAFE Centre.** In 2017, the Singapore Police Force and the Singapore General Hospital launched the OneSAFE Centre to bring emotional support, medical attention, and investigations for sexual assault victim-survivors together in a private facility in the Police Cantonment Complex, removing the need for victim-survivors to travel between multiple locations during the investigation process. Medical professionals also undergo gender-sensitive training to respond effectively to gender-based violence against women.
- **One-Stop Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Interview.** The One-Stop Centre for Multi-Disciplinary Interview at KK Women's and Children's Hospital was implemented for children and young person victim-survivors of sexual abuse, and who require forensic and medical examination at the hospital. The model integrates interviews by various parties into a single interview so that victim-survivors need not repeatedly recount their experience.
- **Raise awareness of victim care and support measures.** Since March 2020, information pamphlets on investigation and court processes, including victim care and support measures, are available at all Neighbourhood Police Centres and on the SPF's website, so as to encourage victims of sexual crime to step forward to report crimes.

## **Protection against family violence**

Family violence must not be condoned in our society. The Government has implemented measures to tackle family violence through various channels.

### *Legislation*

- Under the Women's Charter, all persons experiencing family violence may apply for protection orders. When granting a protection order, the Family Court can also grant other orders, such as a domestic exclusion order or counselling order. Survivors of family violence, perpetrators, and their children who are under a counselling order will be required to undergo the Mandatory Counselling Programme. The Programme aims to keep families safe by addressing the perpetrator's use of violence, help family members learn more respectful behaviours to resolve conflict and reduce risk of violence recurring. All victims of harassment, including those in an intimate partner relationships with the offender, may apply for protection orders under POHA. The provisions under POHA are deemed to have been contravened if a specified hurt offence against the victim has been committed. The court may order parties to attend counselling.

- The Penal Code complements the provisions in the Women’s Charter and POHA to cover a range of offences, including offences that can be committed in a familial setting, such as sexual and hurt offences.

### *Support for victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence*

- **Social service:** Persons who experience or perpetrate family violence can seek support from the Family Violence Specialist Centres (FVSCs) or Family Service Centres (FSCs). Social service professionals partner families, and the Courts where applicable, to determine the most appropriate interventions and safety plans depending on the family’s specific circumstances. The Police will also proactively refer victim-survivors of family violence who require social services to the nearest FVSCs or FSCs. Victim-survivors who are unable to return home or find an alternative place can be provided temporary accommodation in one of the four crisis shelters funded by MSF, while social service professionals work through safety plans and longer-term housing arrangements with them.
- **Monitoring of family violence cases:** Within the victims’ first week of lodging a Police report, the Police will check in with the victims and find out if they need further assistance (e.g. referral to FVSCs/ FSCs). As part of victim protection, the Police also encourage victims to apply for a personal protection order (PPO) or expedited protection order from the Court to restrain the perpetrator from committing further family violence against them. The FVSCs/FSCs check in regularly with the survivors of family violence whom they work with, and update safety plans where necessary to ensure that the survivors remain safe.

### *Public education and detection*

- MSF has run the “Break the Silence | Against Family Violence” campaign since 2016 to raise awareness on family violence through mass and social media engagements, community engagements and outreach to schools. The campaign continues to (a) encourage conversations on family violence and what it constitutes; (b) educate the public that family violence is not a private matter; and (c) equip bystanders with resources on how to safely step in to help those who may be affected by it.
- In February 2021, MSF launched the 24-hour National Anti-Violence Helpline (NAVH) at 1800-777-0000 to make it easier for survivors of violence and abuse, and members of the public, to seek help.

## **Protection of women across domains**

### *Protection from online harms*

#### **Regulation**

Under the Broadcasting Act (BA), the Internet Code of Practice (ICOP) prohibits egregious material that is objectionable on the grounds of public interest, public morality, public order, public security, national harmony, or is otherwise prohibited by applicable Singapore laws from being broadcasted in or from Singapore. The ICOP also requires broadcasting licensees to use their best efforts to ensure that prohibited material is not broadcast via the Internet to users in Singapore. This includes harmful content which promotes sexual violence or sexual activity involving coercion or non-consent.

## **Education**

The Digital for Life movement was launched in February 2021 to help Singaporeans embrace digital technologies as a lifelong pursuit and lead digitally-enriched lives. In support of the movement, the Media Literacy Council promotes digital literacy resources to educate the public on being more discerning and empathetic online, to create a safer, smarter, and kinder internet for all. The Council also produces resources to help individuals navigate and avoid falling victim to technology-facilitated harms such as sexual grooming, pornography, and other related online risks including body image issues, cyberbullying and online harassment. The next bound of our digital readiness efforts will continue to focus on empowerment and wellness to build a safe and inclusive digital society.

## ***Protection from workplace harassment***

The Government takes a serious stand against workplace harassment, and has put in place measures to guide employers to address instances of workplace harassment and support affected employees. Egregious cases, such as outrage of modesty or unlawful stalking, may amount to offences punishable under the Penal Code or POHA.

## **Grievance Handling**

The TGFEF requires employers to put in place proper procedures to handle grievances independently, objectively and confidentially, including those related to workplace harassment. This is supplemented by the Tripartite Advisory on Managing Workplace Harassment which guides employers and employees on how to prevent and manage harassment at the workplace.

## **Support for Affected Individuals**

TAFEP's Workplace Harassment Resource and Recourse Centre was established in 2019, to provide support and recourse for affected workers who have encountered workplace harassment. After a report is made, TAFEP will follow-up with the employer to investigate the claim, and provide closure to the affected individual, including referrals to other organisations for further support (e.g. counselling) if necessary. If the company fails to address the complaint adequately even after TAFEP's intervention, MOM can take action against the company, such as through the suspension of work pass privileges. From January 2019 to December 2021, TAFEP handled close to 150 cases of workplace harassment, of which about one in five was related to sexual harassment<sup>3</sup>.

## **Resources for Employers**

TAFEP's Workplace Harassment Resource and Recourse Centre also provides resources, advice and assistance to employers on how to prevent or respond to feedback on workplace harassment and put in place proper workplace harassment policies and processes. TAFEP works closely with tripartite partners to conduct regular courses to train key personnel such as HR, line managers and supervisors to adopt policies to prevent and manage workplace harassment. Over 2,500 company personnel were trained from 2016 – 2021.

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<sup>3</sup> The remaining cases were related to verbal abuse, bullying and physical abuse at the workplace.

## *Promoting safe sport*

As a microcosm of society, the sporting environment is not immune from inappropriate behaviours. Measures have been put in place to provide a safe sporting environment for all participants in sport, including women.

### **Safe Sport Commission**

The Safe Sport Commission was established by SportSG to spearhead the implementation of Safe Sport initiatives and policies. Since 2018, Safe Sport efforts have been implemented by SportSG, the Singapore National Olympic Council (SNOC) and the National Sporting Associations (NSAs). As of 30 September 2021, 59 of the 64 NSAs have signed commitment statements to implement safeguarding policies. 200 Safeguarding Officers have been trained across the NSAs and SportSG to act as first responders for reports of concern within their organisations. Close to 6,000 coaches have attended SportSG's Values & Principles in Sport Workshop, pledging their commitment to the Coach's Code of Ethics.

### **Victim support**

A Safe Sport Support Network of befrienders and counsellors will be established by the Safe Sport Commission in partnership with Team Nila, SNOC Athletes' Commission and SNOC Women in Sport Committee to facilitate access to psychosocial support for affected persons. This will be rolled out in 2022. SportSG, SNOCs' Athlete's Commission and Women in Sport Committee are also working with a local research institution to conduct a climate survey among athletes to better understand the prevalence of inappropriate behaviors within the ecosystem.

## **EXISTING EFFORTS TO SUPPORT VARIOUS GROUPS OF WOMEN**

### **Support for vulnerable groups of women**

#### *Support initiatives for single parents and low-income women*

Vulnerable groups of women, including single unwed mothers, divorced women, widowed women and women from low-income families, can access a suite of existing support schemes. These schemes also extend to men in need of support.

#### **Financial and social-emotional support**

Vulnerable groups of women can approach Social Service Offices (SSO) for ComCare financial assistance and seek referrals for employment assistance and other support. FSCs also provide family-related and social-emotional support, and coordinate services rendered across different Government agencies for clients with multiple or complex needs.

#### **Community Link (ComLink)**

In 2019, MSF launched the ComLink pilot at four sites, targeting around 1,000 families. ComLink aims to empower families with children living in rental housing to improve their circumstances and build up resources for a brighter future. This is done through proactive outreach, close case support, and galvanising the community to offer customised programmes and services to the families. At each ComLink town, an SSO leads a ComLink Alliance, comprising government agencies, corporates and community partners to pool resources and steer this effort. Given the impact of COVID-19, MSF has accelerated plans to scale up ComLink to 21 towns by 2022, to benefit 14,000 families with children living in rental housing nationwide.

## Housing

To ensure their children have a stable home to grow up in, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) will assist single unwed parents with their housing needs and assess each case holistically. Single unwed parents who are in stable employment and can afford to buy a flat will be allowed to buy up to a new 3-room flat in the non-mature estates, or a resale flat. For those who have insufficient finances and need a place to stay, HDB will consider them for public rental if it is in their child's best interests, taking into account inputs from social workers if necessary.

## Community initiatives

There are many community support initiatives for vulnerable women, which include:

- **Income and employment:** Daughters Of Tomorrow supports low-income women to find gainful employment by partnering organisations to better meet their needs, such as by providing flexible work arrangements.
- **Unplanned pregnancy:** Safe Place by Lakeside Family Services provides support for women with unplanned pregnancies through case management and counselling, temporary accommodation, and referrals to other partners.
- **Support for single parents:** HCSA Community Services' Single Parent Informed, Involved, Included (SPIN) programme provides a self-help portal for single parents, including fathers and mothers. A community of peer support and volunteer befrienders under SPIN also provides practical and socio-emotional support to single parents.
- **Socio-emotional support for widows:** WiCare is a community support group for senior widows aged 50 and above to cope with grief and adjust to widowhood.

## *Support initiatives for divorcing/divorced and low-income women*

### **Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP)**

The Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP) is a consultation session for parents with minor children before filing for divorce. This is compulsory for parents with children below 21 years old, and who do not have a signed formal agreement pertaining to a parenting plan and all other divorce matters, as required under the Women's Charter. It is free and designed to encourage divorcing couples to make informed decisions that prioritise the well-being of their children. It aims to help parents understand the financial challenges of divorce, how divorce impacts living arrangements, child custody and access, and the importance of co-parenting and having a parenting plan. The MPP is available at Strengthening Families Programme@Family Service Centres (FAM@FSCs) and Divorce Support Specialist Agencies (DSSAs).

### **Specialised support for divorcees**

Divorcees and divorced families who require further support to help adjust to the transition may also approach the FAM@FSCs and DSSAs.

## **Support for single-parent and low-income families with children**

All Singapore citizen children benefit from schemes that support their care, growth and development, regardless of the marital status of their parents. This includes Child Development Account (CDA) benefits, preschool subsidies, student care fee assistance and healthcare subsidies.

- In 2016, CDA benefits were extended to children of single unwed parents, including the CDA First Step Grant and matched co-savings from the Government. In 2017, 16 weeks of paid maternity leave were extended to single unwed mothers.
- Preschool subsidies were enhanced in January 2020, and low-income families pay as little as \$3 per month for full-day childcare at Anchor Operator preschools. Since August 2020, families under HDB's Public Rental Scheme, MSF's ComCare Short-to-Medium-Term Assistance (SMTA) or Long-Term Assistance (LTA) also automatically qualify for maximum preschool subsidies, regardless of the mother's working status.
- The Student Care Fee Assistance (SCFA) was enhanced in 2020 to enhance affordability of after-school care for working parents with school-going children aged 7 – 14 years old. Lower-income families pay as little as \$5/month for student care at centres registered with MSF charging median fee (\$295 per month).
- KidSTART provides upstream support to children aged 0 – 6 from low-income families. Parents are equipped with the knowledge and skills to nurture their children, including their physical and socio-emotional health and well-being. KidSTART also works with community and corporate partners to provide holistic support to families, and helps parents enrol their children in preschools. Since 2016, KidSTART has reached more than 2,000 children across its three programme components (i.e. home visitation programme, supported playgroups, and enhanced support to preschools). Growing Together with KidSTART was also launched to involve the community in helping KidSTART families.

## EXISTING EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE MINDSET SHIFTS

### **Inculcate values and address gender stereotypes through education**

Gender stereotypes are addressed in the curriculum. Students are taught to respect and empathise with others, and encouraged to pursue careers they are interested in without being limited by gender stereotypes.

#### **School Curriculum**

Both genders are given balanced representation in school textbooks. Gender stereotypes are addressed across subjects, and women's experiences, contributions and achievements are highlighted alongside those of men. Students also discuss issues related to women's development in class, e.g. in the languages and humanities subjects at the secondary and pre-university levels.

#### **Character and Citizenship Education (CCE) in schools**

CCE includes topics on gender and gender stereotypes. Students are taught the importance of not stereotyping, and learn to appreciate one's unique qualities, strengths and talents, and to respect and empathise with others. Students also learn to consider what respect looks like for boys and girls, and that respect should be accorded to all, regardless of gender. They are taught to be mindful of their words and actions when relating to one another, to create a safe and respectful community for all. In lessons on gender stereotypes, students explore notions of masculinity and femininity.

## **Fostering a culture of respect in the IHLs**

Students have various opportunities through classroom modules, dialogues, workshops and other such platforms, to discuss and understand that roles in the home and workspace should not be bound by gender stereotypes. They learn to embrace positive attitudes towards acceptance, regardless of gender, across industries and jobs. Most IHLs also have compulsory modules on respect and appropriate behaviour for all students, and the remaining IHLs will roll out such modules by mid-2022. These modules aim not only to tackle the issue of sexual misconduct, but also to promote deeper shifts in culture and mindset that will create a safe and respectful community for everyone regardless of gender.

## **Education and Career Guidance**

Through Education and Career Guidance (ECG) in CCE, students are encouraged to explore a variety of education and career pathways while countering gender stereotypes. ECG Counsellors in schools and IHLs guide students to recognise how gender stereotypes may limit education or career pathways, and to better understand their interests and strengths and explore career sectors accordingly. The MySkillsFuture Student Portal also features resources and information offering a balanced representation of gender across careers.

In the Polytechnics/Institutes of Technical Education (ITE), the ECG curriculum includes industry-related experiences such as internships and career fairs which enable students to make informed decisions on transiting either to further education or the workforce, and to move beyond gender stereotypes. For example, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and SGInnovate partnered 21C GIRLS, a charity which provides coding programmes for girls, in 2018 to launch a three-month course called “Empower: AI for Girls”. This course was extended to the other polytechnics in 2020.

## **Ground-up initiatives to encourage mindset shift**

There are various community and ground-up programmes and initiatives to address traditional notions of gender stereotypes and promote mindset shifts. A few examples are listed below.

### **Families for Life (FFL)**

Families for Life (FFL) is a people-led movement, rallying like-minded individuals, families and organisations to strengthen family bonds. FFL works with various stakeholders such as Centre for Fathering (CFF) which drives the Dads for Life and Mums for Life movements to promote active fatherhood, shared parenting and household responsibilities through its campaigns and programmes (e.g. Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, ICAN Fathering workshop). By 2025, FFL and CFF target to partner a quarter of primary and secondary schools’ Parent Support Groups with the aim to shift societal mindsets towards more active and involved fathering. Working through volunteers such as licensed solemnisers and parent support group leaders, FFL also seeks to encourage the involvement and commitment of both genders in relationships and/or family building. FFL also promotes these messages via its year-round signature events and campaigns through various marketing platforms and channels.

### **Centre for Fathering (CFF) Support for Families during COVID-19**

Beside seeding messages on spousal support and sharing of responsibilities in their campaigns and programmes, CFF recognises the importance and effectiveness of father-to-father support in the journey

of fatherhood. Hence, they organised regular Facebook live events, Zoom and face-to-face (when possible) sessions for fathers to share experiences, encouragement and discuss topics close to their heart such as conflict management at home with fellow fathers.

### **United Women Singapore's (UWS) Boys Empowered Programme**

In April 2021, United Women Singapore (UWS) launched a Boys Empowered Programme to help boys and young men between 12 – 19 years old to understand the connection between negative gender stereotypes and perpetration of violence against women. The programme creates safe spaces for boys to unpack and examine their notion of masculinity and unlearn some of the notions that may lead to harm toward others and themselves. Since the launch of the initiative, UWS has reached out through workshops and a speaker series to community groups, ITE West and Singapore Prisons (Juvenile).

## *Industry partnerships to encourage women's representation in STEM*

### **SG Women in Tech**

In 2019, the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) started the SG Women in Tech (SG WiT) initiative with support from community and industry partners, to attract, retain and develop women talent across a diversity of jobs in the infocomm workforce. In 2020, SG WiT and the Singapore Computer Society launched the annual SG100WIT list, featuring female role models who have made significant contributions to the infocomm technology industry in the past year. SG WiT also collaborates with secondary schools and IHLs to raise interest in and awareness of the infocomm industry.

Together with SG Tech, SG WiT kicked off the Corporate Pledge initiative on 8 March 2021, to encourage companies to implement concrete measures to attract, retain and develop more women in tech. To date, 53 companies have pledged to create a conducive environment with strong support systems to attract, retain and develop more women tech professionals and encourage more young female students to pursue an interest in the STEM fields.

### **SG Cyber Women**

Through the SG Cyber Women X Series of events organised in partnership with community and industry partners, the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (CSA) aims to encourage more women to explore the cybersecurity profession. Since its launch in September 2020, technical workshops, career talks and Capture-The-Flag competitions have been held, to engage women through education, develop their professional skillsets through learning and training and advance their careers through support and inspiration.

In addition, SG Cyber Youth is a national programme designed to guide youths – male and female – in their cybersecurity journey. The programme reaches out to students from secondary to tertiary levels, and provides them with opportunities to explore cybersecurity as a career, and exposure to relevant technical knowledge and soft skills. A key initiative is the Youth Cyber Exploration Programme (YCEP) boot camp, launched in 2018. YCEP has trained 700 secondary school students over the past two years. Through SG Cyber Youth, CSA plans to reach out to 10,000 youths over three years with training boot camps, competitions, learning journeys and career mentoring sessions.



**Annex D –  
Recommendations  
of the Taskforce on  
Family Violence**

**Thrust 1** – Increase awareness, strengthen societal attitudes against family violence, and enhance preventive efforts for persons at risk

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	Improve awareness of family violence (e.g. types/thresholds/signs and symptoms/helplines) in the community
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	Strengthen relationships and marriages to prevent family violence

**Thrust 2** – Make it easier for victim-survivors and the community to report family violence, and get immediate help

<b>Recommendation 3</b>	Enhance the National Anti-Violence Helpline to allow for multiple modes of reporting of family violence
<b>Recommendation 4(I)</b>	Enhance support for young victims of family violence
<b>Recommendation 4(II)</b>	Expand Home Team Community Assistance and Referral Scheme (HT CARES) to next-of-kin of offenders investigated for family violence offences and set up more HT CARES Centres
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	Increase deterrence for family violence offenders
<b>Recommendation 6(I)</b>	Clarify the mandatory reporting obligations under Section 424 of the Criminal Procedure Code by addressing the ambiguity arising from its wordings
<b>Recommendation 6(II)</b>	Develop consistent, standardised assessment and screening tools to enable frontline professionals to better identify cases involving family violence, manage the risks and needs of survivors and perpetrators and know when to report cases
<b>Recommendation 7</b>	Enhance emergency response for family violence by improving triaging of cases by frontline responders, and introducing emergency social service interventions for family violence cases
<b>Recommendation 8</b>	Reduce the vulnerability of foreign spouses on Long-Term Visit Passes (LTVPs) by reducing barriers (perceived or otherwise) to reporting family violence

**Thrust 3** – Strengthen protection and support for victim-survivors to reduce their risk of being harmed again

<b>Recommendation 9</b>	Improve sharing of case-level information among Government and community partners to support more coordinated and expedited intervention for cases
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<b>Recommendation 10</b>	Work closely with sector to ensure that agencies are well-equipped to holistically and empathetically address the needs of family violence survivors and perpetrators
<b>Recommendation 11</b>	Strengthen legal levers to penalise breaches of Personal Protection Orders (PPOs) and better protect survivors of violence
<b>Recommendation 12</b>	Build a database to track and consolidate key data relating to family violence that can be used for research and analysis purposes
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	Study emerging trends in family violence, including financial abuse of the elderly and parental abuse, and review approaches to tackle these forms of violence
<b>Thrust 4 – Increase the accountability of perpetrators and strengthen their rehabilitation</b>	
<b>Recommendation 14</b>	Empower the Family Justice Courts to order mandatory assessment and treatment for perpetrators, where treatable mental conditions contributed to/exacerbated the risk of occurrence of family violence
<b>Recommendation 15(I)</b>	Strengthen rehabilitation regime for family violence perpetrators, including the mandatory counselling programme (MCP), to improve perpetrators' rehabilitation and treatment to reduce the risk of recurrence of violence
<b>Recommendation 15(II)</b>	Enhance enforcement for counselling orders and put in place strong enforcement measures for other orders additional to a PPO
<b>Recommendation 16</b>	Separate perpetrators from survivors to ensure safety, while providing intervention and rehabilitation for perpetrators