

IN-DEPTH



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→ WRS

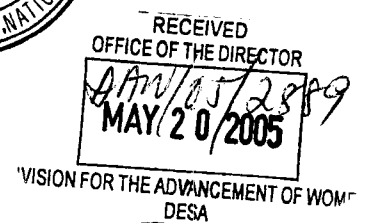
The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to the latter's Note DAW/2005/002 of 31 March 2005 requesting information related to General Assembly resolution 58/185 of 22 December 2003 entitled "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women".

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations has the further honour to submit the paper attached at annex in response to the abovementioned request.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

13 May 2005

Division for the Advancement of Women  
United Nations  
New York





**Resolution adopted by the General Assembly  
58/185: In-depth study on all forms of violence against women**

**Requests for information:**

- i) **A statistical overview on all forms of violence against women in order to better evaluate the scale of such violence, while identifying gaps in data collection and formulating proposals for assessing the extend of the problem.**

<b>Personal Protection Orders (PPO)</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
Total PPO applications (includes application for Domestic Exclusion Orders (DEOs))	2861	2974	2944	2783	2522

*Source: Singapore Subordinate Courts*

The number of PPO applications has been declining since 2000. 2004 showed 11.8% less number of PPO applications compared to 2000. On average, 62% of the PPO applications were made by wives and 10% were by husbands. Ex-spouses accounted for 7% of the applications. The remaining 21% applications were from siblings, parents and parents-in-law, children and other relatives.

- ii) **The causes of violence against women including its root causes and other contributing factors.**

The most prevalent form of family violence is spousal abuse. The reasons for family violence were multi-factorial ranging from matters concerning children to arguments over money, affairs and alcohol abuse.

- iii) **The medium and long term consequences of violence against women.**

Family violence against women affects not only the women, but also other family members and the community at large. Female victims get physical, emotional or psychological injury and in severe abuse cases, face the threat of losing their lives. Over time, abused women become fearful, helpless, confused, anxious and tend to develop a low self-esteem.

Family violence against women also undermines the safety and stability of the family unit. Violence compromises the ability of the family to provide comfort and love to its members. The breakdown of the family as a functioning unit has negative consequences on children who need stability in the family environment for healthy development.

The scars of family violence stay with the family members. Children who witness family violence are the invisible victims. These children tend to be more aggressive and antisocial. They can either act up or be withdrawn, fearful, depressed, and anxious and have low self-esteem. Children exposed to domestic violence are also found to be less socially competent, have difficulty in school and show less ability to empathize with

others' feelings. Their perceptions of the roles and rights of women can also be skewed by their experiences in witnessing violence against female family members.

At the community level, weakening familial relations may affect the social cohesion within the community and necessitate the devotion of greater resources to remedial care.

**iv) The health, social and economic costs of violence against women.**

In financial year 2003, S\$8.7 million was invested in family and child protection and welfare programmes. These expenses cover the costs of running early intervention programmes for children at risk of abuse, mandatory counselling programmes, crisis shelters, public education and training. They exclude the costs incurred by agencies involved in the provision of health, enforcement and legal services.

Abuse – whether physical or emotional – renders women in a state of despair and in need of support. These may take the form of physical help, including care from hospitals, doctors and nurses or in terms of emotional help, including utilising the services of social service providers. The costs of remedial work, notwithstanding, victims of abuse often times also become detached from the community, which poses additional economic costs through opportunity costs in terms of reduced work productivity. Downstream social problems include broken and/or dysfunctional families, poor physical/ psychological health, juvenile and adult criminal behaviour and finally incarceration. Having to tackle these social problems would take a bigger toll on society's resources, not counting the costs associated with suffering experienced by the victims, medical costs and the loss of lives in fatal cases.

**v) The identification of best practice examples in areas including legislation, policies, programmes and effective examples and the efficiency of such mechanism to the end of combating and eliminating violence against women.**

Legislation

The cornerstone of the legislative provisions is the Women's Charter which protects the rights of women and girls in Singapore and provides protection for family members from family violence, and women and girls from sexual offences committed against them. In 1996, amendments were made to the Women's Charter which expanded the coverage of family members who can obtain protection from family violence, as well as the definition of family violence to include emotional and psychological harm. Another significant amendment within Section 65 of the Charter was that the Court could now issue a personal protection order (PPO) on the principle of 'balance of probability', rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt', that violence has occurred or is likely to occur. These changes made it easier for women to seek protection from violence.

The new section 65(5)(b) of the Women's Charter empowers the Court to mandate perpetrators, victims and children to attend counselling. The mandatory counselling order is usually made together with a PPO and it authorises social intervention so that the family can be helped.

In cases where the perpetrator has caused substantial physical hurt to the victim(s), charges may be brought against him/her under the Penal Code and an arrest made based on those charges. Those who violate the PPOs also face penalties.

### Collaborative efforts

A “Many Helping Hands” approach is used in the management of violence against women. The government, the community and families work in concert to tackle social issues in Singapore. Several inter-agency platforms exist to ensure coordination in policies and service delivery. These include the following:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Mandate</b>
Family Violence Dialogue Group (Policy level)	Ministry of Community Development and Sports (MCYS) and the Singapore Police Force.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courts</li> <li>- Prisons</li> <li>- Ministry of Health</li> <li>- Ministry of Education</li> <li>- National Council of Social Service<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Social service agencies such as the Society Against Family Violence and the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitate work processes</li> <li>- Coordinate public education efforts</li> <li>- Develop new areas for collaboration on family violence.</li> </ul>
National Family Violence Networking System (Functional level)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Police</li> <li>- Prisons</li> <li>- Hospitals</li> <li>- Social service agencies</li> <li>- Courts</li> <li>- MCYS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To establish a tight network of support and assistance.</li> <li>- The island-wide networking system essentially provides multiple access points for victims to obtain help</li> </ul>

### Service Standards

The manual on “Integrated Management of Family Violence Cases in Singapore” was revised in February 2003 to map out the protocol, procedures, roles, and responsibilities of each partner agency in the networking system.

### Professional Competency

A training framework exists to ensure a high standard of trained family violence workers. Training is targeted at social workers in the community and hospital settings.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Council of Social Service is an umbrella body for social service agencies in Singapore.

There are 3 levels of training on family violence. The basic training course on family violence prepares frontline workers to handle these cases. At the intermediate level, we equip participants with skills in engaging clients in the change process to stop violence, and counseling for couples on marital issues with a view of stopping the violence. There are also specialised courses for areas such as dealing with alcoholic cases, working with child witnesses of violence and conducting group work for perpetrators and victims.

In addition, the Police and social service agencies have conducted joint training to cover topics such as roles and responsibilities of police in family violence cases; policies and procedures of the Family and Juvenile Court; myths on family violence, and basic skills in attending to clients.

### Participation of Civil Society

The participation of civil society is an integral feature in the management of family violence in Singapore. Several social service centres within the community specialise in family violence work such as the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe) which provides facilities for the application of PPOs through video-conferencing, medical services, legal advice, casework management and counselling services. Another centre is the TRANS Centre which specializes in elder protection work. It spearheads the multi-disciplinary Elder Protection Team to investigate and intervene in elder abuse cases.

### Empowerment of the Family

A key goal of the family violence management system is the empowerment of victims. The Women's Charter allows the Court to issue mandatory counselling orders that enable it to order the victim(s) (or any other persons) to attend counselling. The aim of the Mandatory Counselling Programme is to support victims and their children, and ensure their safety and protection. Counselling sessions cover topics such as anger and conflict management and understanding the cycle of violence to help clients break that cycle. For victims requiring temporary accommodation, crisis shelters offer protection, practical assistance, and emotional support to help them overcome feelings of isolation, develop self-confidence, make decisions and take control of their lives. In Court-ordered Mandatory Counselling, perpetrators of family violence are taught anger and conflict management skills, and how to take personal responsibility and control their impulsive behaviour.

### Public Education Campaigns

To educate the public on the sources of help, MCYS together with its partners promote public awareness on family violence. The focus of the public education initiatives has largely been preventive in nature, emphasising strengthening families and the identification of signs of family violence. Public education materials like pamphlets, posters and collaterals have also been distributed to inform victims and perpetrators of the availability of community resources.