

## **International Disability Alliance (IDA)**

Member Organisations:

Disabled Peoples' International, Down Syndrome International, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the DeafBlind, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, Arab Organization of Disabled People, European Disability Forum, Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus familias (RIADIS), Pacific Disability Forum

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### **Suggestions for disability-relevant recommendations to be included in the Concluding Observations CEDAW Committee 49th Session (11-29 July 2011)**

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) has prepared the following suggestions for the Concluding Observations, based on references to persons with disabilities to be found in the State Report, List of Issues, and Replies.

#### **SINGAPORE**

Singapore has neither ratified nor signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

#### **State Report**

##### **Selected references to persons with disabilities in the state report and list of issues:**

5.6 The Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) sets clear media guidelines prohibiting the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and sexually-discriminating values. In the case of broadcast media, the guidelines state that programmes should not make careless discriminating references to any class or group of people, whether based on race, gender, **disability** or occupational status. In addition, the guidelines regulate the behaviour of broadcasters by disallowing the use of insensitive jokes that might cause hurt to any persons.

12.30 In addition to the 3Ms, i.e. Medisave, Medishield and Medifund, Eldersshield, which is a national insurance scheme to provide the elderly with coverage against severe **disabilities**, was introduced in 2002. As at December 2006, there are about 420,000 males and 330,000 females covered by the scheme.

25 **Disability** sports are opportunities given to persons with physical, sensory and learning impairments to play sports or engage in physical activities both competitive and recreationally.

#### **List of Issues**

6. The Committee, in paragraph 14 of its previous concluding observations, encouraged the State party to incorporate in its national legislation a definition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 of the Convention, and also to include provisions to prohibit discrimination against women on other grounds, in particular marital status, age, **disability** and national origin. What efforts have been carried out by the State party to effectively implement these recommendations? Please provide information on the obstacles faced by the State party in this regard, in

particular given the absence of specific gender equality and anti-gender discrimination legislation in Singapore, as indicated in paragraph 2.4 of the State party report.

12. Please provide up-to-date information on: (a) the nature of reported incidents of violence against women, including domestic violence and marital rape and, if available, the number of women murdered by their husbands, partners or ex-partners; (b) the number of convictions, and the types of sanctions imposed on perpetrators; and (c) reparation granted to victims. Please indicate if the existing laws and norms on violence against women criminalize all acts of violence and to what extent the vulnerability of older women and **women with disabilities** was taken into consideration.

19. What steps have been taken by the State party to strengthen women's representation in public and political life and in decision-making positions, including in the Cabinet, Parliament, the judiciary, public administration and the private sector? Please also elaborate on the measures undertaken to improve the political participation and participation in public life of women belonging to minority groups and **women with disabilities**.

29. Please provide information on measures taken to protect and promote the rights of **women with disabilities** and eliminate discrimination against them, especially in employment, education and health care. Does the State party envisage extending the Compulsory Education Act to non-citizen children and **children with disabilities**?

### [Replies](#)

6.1 While the legal basis for gender equality may not be as specific as the Committee would like, Article 12(1) of our Constitution provides sufficient guarantee of equality to all Singaporeans, men and women, and regardless of their marital status, age, **disability** and national origin. All domestic laws are based on this principle of equality of all persons before the law. In addition, there are specific laws that protect the rights of women in particular areas (see Annex 1). Any person who is of the view that his or her rights under the law have been infringed upon can bring an action in the local courts.

12.3 Singapore's existing legislation criminalises acts of violence against women, and allows the relevant authorities to take the necessary action to protect all vulnerable groups. More information on the legislation that protect women against violence, in particular the Women's Charter, the Penal Code and the **Mental Capacity Act** can be found at **Annex 1**. In addition, there are specific provisions that create offences for sexual exploitation of **minors and persons who are mentally disabled**.

19.1 Please see our response to Q9 for Singapore's approach to gender equality and our initiatives to promote women's participation in political and public and decision-making at all levels and in all areas including employment, education, political and public life, and the judiciary. The Singapore Government strongly encourages all women to participate actively in political and public life including those belonging to minority groups and **women with disabilities**. Please see our response to Q24 on the measures taken to protect the rights of employment of women belonging to ethnic minority groups and Q29 on measures taken to protect and promote the rights of **women with disabilities** and eliminate discrimination against them.

29.1 Singapore's vision is to be an inclusive society where men and women with disabilities are given the opportunity to become equal, integral and contributing members of the society. To achieve this vision, the Government set up the Enabling

Masterplan Steering Committee, comprising members from the people, public and private sectors, to review and chart services and programmes in the disability sector from 2007 to 2011<sup>21</sup>. Whilst families continue to be the first line of care and support for **persons with disabilities**, there are services, programmes and resources to support families in caregiving. The Government set up the Centre for Enabled Living in 2009 to serve as an information and referral centre for **disability services** and eldercare.

29.2 Employment is key to ensuring that **persons with disabilities** maximise their potential and live as independently as possible. TAFEP promotes the adoption of non-discriminatory and responsible employment practices. A guidebook for employers which sets out best practices, advice and practical suggestions on employment of **persons with disabilities** is available on its website. To equalise employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, the Government set up an inter-agency workgroup, which oversees the implementation of initiatives such as **Post Special Education Pre-Employment Training Project and IT Apprenticeship Programme run by the Society for the Physically Disabled**.

29.3 The Open Door Fund (ODF) provides a grant of up to S\$100,000 per company to encourage employers to hire **persons with disabilities** by supporting them in job redesign and the modification of the physical workspace. Since April 2009, the ODF had been revised to include apprenticeship training and enhanced job support for persons with disabilities (e.g. job coaches). **A network of pro-disability** employers, the Enabling Employers Network, was set up in 2007 to promote employment of **persons with disabilities** in various sectors.

29.4 Early identification and intervention are pivotal to the prognosis of a **child with special needs**. MOH oversees nation-wide neonatal screening for overt physical and developmental abnormalities. It runs a comprehensive Child Development Programme (CDP) through two tertiary hospitals with specialised child development units. CDP aims to support and prepare **children with developmental disabilities** to achieve their full potential in the appropriate educational stream. Singapore adopts a mixed healthcare financing system with multiple tiers of protection to ensure no Singaporean is denied access to appropriate care. In addition to the basic healthcare tiers which cover subsidies and insurance for all citizens, Eldersshield, an **affordable severe disability insurance scheme** which provides basic financial protection to those who need long-term care, especially during old age, is available to guard against the financial risks involved.

29.5 To protect and promote the rights of **women with mental incapacity**, under the Mental Capacity Act, the donees who are authorised to make decisions on their behalf are not allowed to make decisions concerning certain health issues such as sexual sterilisation, the termination of pregnancy, registering or withdrawing an objection under the Human Organ Transplant Act, making or revoking an advance medical directive under the Advance Medical Directive Act, or the carrying out or continuation of life-sustaining treatment or any other treatment that a person providing healthcare reasonably believes is necessary to prevent a serious deterioration in the condition of the person lacking capacity.

29.6 All children, regardless of gender and including those with disabilities or special needs, have access to quality education in Singapore, achieved through fee subsidy schemes and various outreach efforts. MOE dedicated S\$15 million to deploy Special Needs Officers into mainstream schools to support **children with dyslexia and autism spectrum disorders** from 2005 to 2010. Today, almost all children with special needs attend either Special Education or mainstream schools. There are very few – eight in 2010's Primary One cohort – who did not do so, due to **very severe disabilities** or

medical conditions. Such cases are monitored, and if necessary reviewed for the need for other interventions. The aim is to allow **children with disabilities** to enjoy a more customised education system to cater to their special needs, which enables them to obtain the best educational support possible. This flexibility requires them to be exempted from the Compulsory Education system which imposes a standard education curriculum for children.

### **Recommendations from IDA**

- Collect adequate data on women and girls with disabilities and use disaggregated data and results of studies to develop policies and programmes to promote equal opportunities for them in society
- Adopt measures to ensure that women with disabilities are consulted and participate in leadership roles in policy development.
- Raise awareness and provide more information about women and girls with disabilities, who are often subjected to multiple forms of discrimination, especially with regard to access to education, employment, access to health care and violence.
- Address the heightened risk for girls and women with disabilities of becoming victims of domestic violence and abuse, and adopt urgent measures to ensure that both services and information for victims are made accessible to women and girls with disabilities living in institutions and the community. Put into place measures and accessible mechanisms to ensure that women with disabilities are protected from marital rape and violence.
- Introduce measures to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, can live and be raised in family environments in the community, and to eliminate the institutionalisation of children by building up community based services and support to children with disabilities and to their families.
- Adopt measures to ensure that all health care and services, provided to persons with disabilities, including all mental health care and services, is based on the free and informed consent of the person concerned, and that involuntary treatment and confinement are not permitted by law in accordance with the latest international standards.
- Adopt measures to ensure that all information, healthcare and services relating to sexual and reproductive health are made accessible to women and girls with disabilities, and that they are respectful of the dignity and integrity of persons with disabilities based on the free and informed consent of the individual concerned, and that consensual treatment such as the administration of contraception, or fertility treatments are not denied, while all non-consensual treatment, including that for which consent is given by a third party, is not permitted by law (including *inter alia* forced abortions, forced contraception, and forced sterilisation)
- Consider acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol
- Take steps to include an explicit prohibition of discrimination based on disability into the Constitution and the Compulsory Education Act. Introduce measures to bring the education of *all* children, including the education of children with disabilities, under one Ministry, the Ministry of Education, and to ensure that education of children with

disabilities is also regulated by the Compulsory Education Act. See CRC Committee's Concluding Observation on Singapore adopted in February 2011, para 53.

- Adopt measures in the law to ensure the implementation of inclusive education of children with disabilities, such as the obligatory training of all teachers (beyond special education teachers), to require individual education plans for all students, ensure the availability of assistive devices and support in classrooms, educational materials and curricula, ensure the accessibility of physical school environments, encourage the teaching of sign language and disability culture, allocate budget for all of the above. **I**nclude inclusive education as an integral part of core teacher training curricula in universities to ensure that the values and principles of inclusive education are infused at the outset of teacher training and teaching careers.

**CRC Committee's Concluding Observations on Singapore adopted February 2011**

53. The Committee recommends that, in accordance with article 23 of the Convention, the State party:

- (a) Extend the Compulsory Education Act (2003) to include all **children with disabilities**;
- (b) Provide inclusive education to **children with special needs**;
- (c) Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data on **children with disabilities** and their specific needs and use these data to develop appropriate programmes and policies for them;
- (d) Provide training from a child rights perspective for professional staff working with **children with disabilities**, such as teachers, social workers and medical, paramedical and related personnel;
- (e) Allocate more resources to ensure that **children with disabilities** have timely access to early intervention services and integration within mainstream schools;
- (f) Strengthen support to families with **children with disabilities**;
- (g) Consider ratifying the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and its Optional Protocol; and