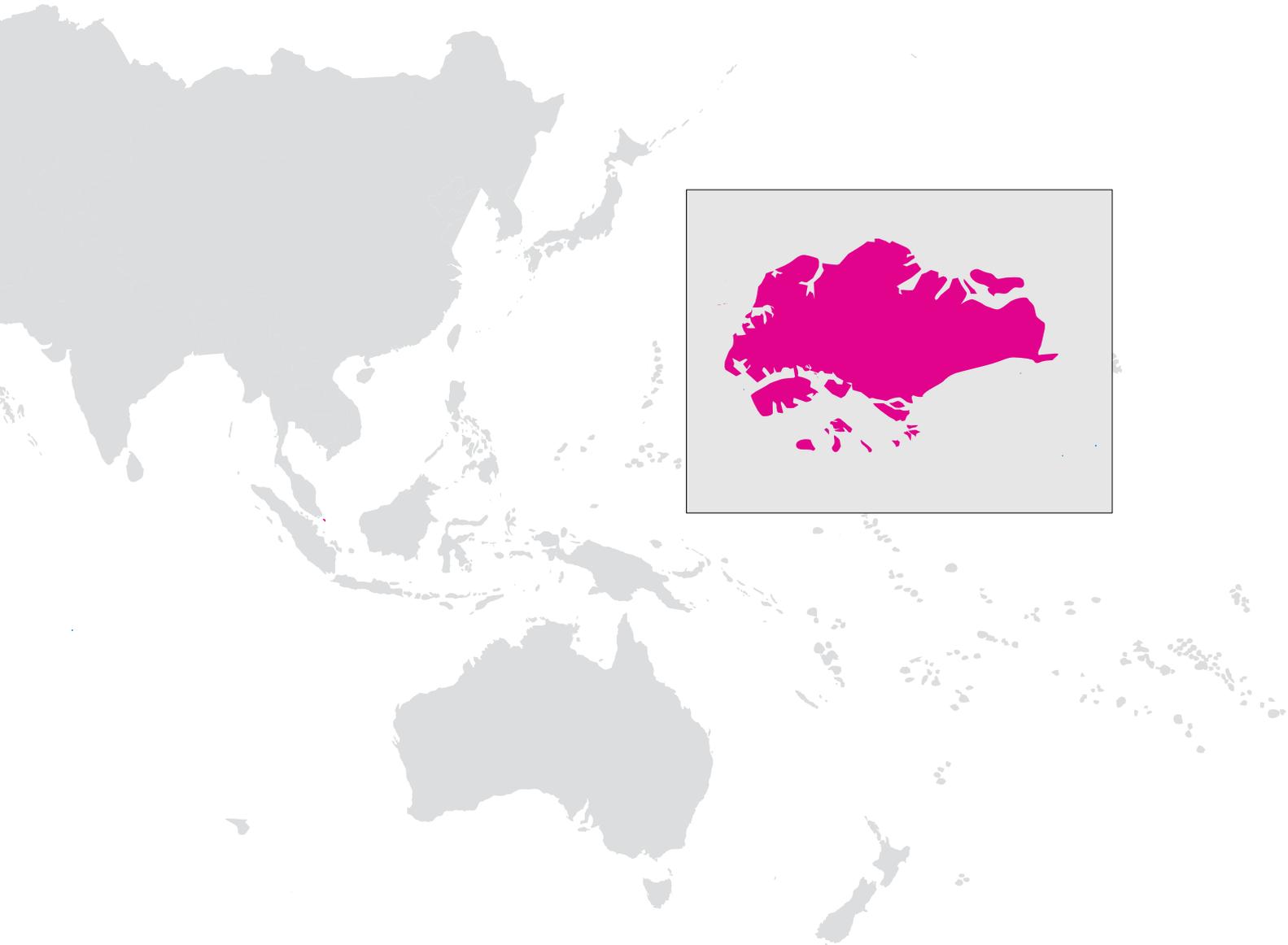




COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SINGAPORE

Research Report
ECPAT International



Campaign Partners:



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Background information on the 'Stop Sex Trafficking of Children & Young People' Campaign partners in Singapore can be found at the back of this report.

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Final Research Report

ECPAT International & Dr. Sallie Yea

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Disclaimer

This report does not set out to be a comprehensive study on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Singapore. The information presented in the literature review and legal framework sections were collected from a number of open source materials and documents available to the public. While care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, the latter may not be exact and ECPAT International makes no representation or warranty that the report is free of error or omission. Readers should further be aware that laws cited may have been amended or repealed since the time of writing. The information is sometimes linked to external sites over which ECPAT International has no control and for which ECPAT International assumes no responsibility.

ECPAT International

ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations that are formally linked and coordinate their work to promote and support the realisation of children's rights to protection against commercial sexual exploitation. **ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.** Through its members in over 75 countries around the world, ECPAT seeks to advance the implementation of the *Agenda for Action against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* and the relevant international instruments that guarantee child protection against commercial sexual exploitation. One of the key initiatives ECPAT implements in advancing the protection of children at the national, regional and global levels is conducting country-specific research, in collaboration with local partner organisations, to develop a profile of the underlying factors, scope, manifestations and circumstances in which commercial sexual exploitation of children takes place. The validated findings of this research are used to foster dialogue and elicit participation in defining priorities and agreeing on agendas for concrete counteraction and follow-up.

The literature review and conclusion and recommendations components of this research were researched and compiled by Alessia Altamura. The analysis of the legal framework in Singapore was prepared by Brittany Twiss. Further technical and coordination support was provided by Kritsana Pimonsaengsuriya and Mark Capaldi.

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Campaign Partners:



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	Association of Banks in Singapore
AIMS	Advisory Council on the Impact of New Media on Society
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEANPOL	ASEAN Chiefs of Police
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CAPT	Child Abuse Protection Team
CPO	Child Protection Officer
CPS	Child Protection Service
CRC	(United Nations) Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSEC	Commercial sexual exploitation of children
CSE	Commercial sexual exploitation
CSO	Civil society organisation
CST	Child sex tourism
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
FAN	Family access networks
FSC	Family services centre
GDP	Gross domestic product
GMS	Greater Mekong Sub-Region
HIV-AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HOME	Humanitarian Organisation for Migrant Economics
ICA	Immigration and Checkpoints Authority
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission
ICSC	Inter-Ministry Cyberwellness Steering Committee
ICT	information and communication technology
IIAS	Internet Industry Association of Singapore
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMH	Institute of Mental Health
INMAC	Internet and Media Advisory Committee
IRC	Internet relay chat
ISP	Internet service provider
MCYS	Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports
MDA	Media Development Authority
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MICA	Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOM	Ministry of Manpower
NIAC	National Internet Advisory Committee
NCPA	National Child Protection Authority
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPA	National Police Agency of Philippines
NYF	National Youth Forum
OPSC	<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>
PAP	People's Action Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
SPF	Singapore Police Force
STIs	Sexually transmitted infections
SVP	Social Visit Pass (visa)
TWC2	Transient Workers Count Too
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNIAP	United Nations Inter-Agency Project
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
YMKK	Yayasan Mitra Kesehatan Kemanusiaan (NGO on Batam Island, Indonesia)

Foreword

Over the past five to ten years, there has been continued evidence, emerging all over the world, indicating that the number of child sex trafficking victims is rising and that, due to its clandestine nature, we may only be seeing the 'tip of the iceberg'. Thus, it is all the more urgent to acquire a better understanding of the issue.

Agencies working in many countries worldwide have recognised that the illegal and clandestine nature of human trafficking, including child trafficking for sexual purposes, has contributed to a lack of official statistics and limited information about this crime. Singapore too is experiencing difficulties with limited data and information on human trafficking involving women, children and young people. In an effort to document the violation of children's and women's rights through human trafficking for sexual purposes, this study has been conducted to provide further empirical data and evidence-based knowledge on sex trafficking in Singapore. Through a comprehensive literature review and field level research involving interviews with trafficked victims and key informants, the findings have presented a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the issue; gathering and examining relevant information on the prevalence, characteristics and *modus operandi* of this phenomenon as it occurs in Singapore. Through the respondents' own voices, the findings have also identified a number of key factors needed in protecting trafficked victims, including an understanding of victimology for commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC); a legal framework and

procedures, including victim identification; and the provision of services/assistance to meet the particular needs of each of the different age groups of victims.

This research report has also shed light on other CSEC manifestations, which are increasingly intertwined with child sex trafficking. For example, the literature review has noted cases of Singaporean citizens travelling to neighbouring countries and engaging in sexual activities with children (who also may have been trafficked). The report also reveals that Singaporean children are vulnerable to specific forms of sexual exploitation that are connected to the use of the Internet and other ICTs, such as *enjo-kosai* or 'compensated dating'.

By committing to the 2008 *Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents*, the Singapore Government has signalled its intention to reinforce its action against child sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children. This research report urgently calls for concrete mechanisms/interventions and collaboration of all stakeholders to increase the protection of children from sexual exploitation in all its forms. It is hoped that this research report will be a constructive step forward, assisting all stakeholders to honour this commitment to ensure the right of children and young people to live free from sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Executive Summary

Child protection is a priority for the Government of Singapore and efforts have reportedly been made to create a violence-free environment where children (below 18 years of age) and minors¹ can enjoy their right to be protected from any form of abuse and neglect. However, attention given to child trafficking and sexual exploitation in all its manifestations remains limited. This has resulted in inadequate awareness, prevention and protection measures.

Various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academic studies have demonstrated the presence of elements of human trafficking in three sectors: male migrant workers in construction and shipping; female migrant workers in paid domestic work; and Vietnamese marriage migrants. The information collected by these NGOs and academics, while valuable, does not specifically address human trafficking nor, importantly for this study, human trafficking for sexual purposes where children and young people may be involved.

In an effort to expand and deepen the knowledge base on child trafficking for sexual purposes in Singapore, this situational analysis study on commercial sexual exploitation of children and its links to child trafficking was conducted by ECPAT International (in partnership with Dr. Sallie Yea). With support from The Body Shop and in collaboration with the NGO H.O.M.E. The Body Shop has engaged the UNIFEM National Committee of Singapore for the campaign's public education and stakeholder engagement initiatives. The report places a particular emphasis on identifying and understanding the causes of and risk factors surrounding these issues, and is expected to serve as a resource for government agencies and international and non-governmental organisations wishing to undertake targeted preventative and protective actions.

1. Research components

As part of the research project, a preliminary review of existing literature on CSEC issues in Singapore and a technical analysis of the related legal framework were conducted.

The aim of this work is to present an overall picture of the phenomenon and examine the measures implemented to date and the main challenges to be addressed, including in the area of legal protection. Based on a wide range of resources and documentation (articles, media materials, research reports, etc), the desktop research reveals that like other developed countries in the world, despite having high social and economic indicators and a child protection system in place, Singapore is affected by all manifestations of CSEC. While the absence of official statistics and estimations does not allow an assessment of the real extent of the problem, existing information suggests that these manifestations are increasingly intertwined and children are often victimised through multiple or complex forms of CSEC.

The literature review was followed by field level research that specifically examines the prevalence, characteristics and *modus operandi* of trafficking of women, children and young people to Singapore for commercial sexual exploitation. The field research (conducted between October 2009 and March 2010) draws on a range of interviews conducted with different national groups and informants, including Bangladeshis, Chinese, Filipino, Indonesian, Indians and Thais. Based on 111 in-depth interviews (one-third of which were with minors and young people themselves), the field research provides evidence that women, as well as children and young people, are indeed trafficked to Singapore for the purpose of CSE. Equally, the responses of the participants provide detailed insights into their experiences at all stages of the trafficking process (recruitment, movement, exploitation and exit) and information on the circumstances that rendered them vulnerable to the possibility of being trafficked. While participants were primarily from the Philippines (51) and Indonesia (50), smaller groups of victims from Bangladesh and the People's Republic of China were also interviewed.

2. Child sex trafficking: a reality in Singapore

While the desktop review exposed a lack of disaggregated data specific to child trafficking for sexual purposes, the

¹ Minor is defined as a person under the age of 21 years old, according to Article 372, the Penal Code of Singapore

field research confirmed that the city-state is primarily a destination (as opposed to a transit) country for women, as well as children and young people, trafficked from at least five countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and the People's Republic of China.

The field level research reveals that all participants interviewed for this research entered Singapore on a legal visa. Most of them came to Singapore on Social Visit Pass (SVP) visas, while a small number of them had applications for entertainer visas made on their behalf after arrival, usually by their employers or agents.

Some trafficked victims were aware in advance of the types of 'work' they would be required to do upon arriving in Singapore, but were not fully aware of the conditions attached to that 'work'. Others were deceived with regard to both the type and condition of the 'work' they would be doing. Some were put to 'work' in pubs and clubs where sexual services are provided, while others had to stand in front of hotels waiting for customers. Some were sent to hotels to meet their customers (as pre-arranged by their agents/traffickers), or to 'forest brothels' that appear in the nature reserve and park areas of Singapore, often in close proximity to the dormitories of migrant workers.

Through the information gained from the interviews, the field research found that there are cases of women, as well as children and young people, who are deployed in commercial sex venues in Singapore in situations where they are often denied freedom of movement and association, and where they are kept under constant and close surveillance and monitoring. Leaving these situations by running away or actively seeking assistance is extremely difficult. This is compounded by the fact that those who control victims often threaten them or their families, and by the fact that the victims fear police and other government authorities and NGOs often have a limited ability to access victims.

A further element of control that affected all aspects of the respondents' experiences – including their ability to and terms on which they can leave their situations – is the existence of a debt that bonded them to their trafficker. Around half the participants were aware of their debt prior to arriving in Singapore, but upon arrival discovered that the terms of the debt were altered and the amount of the debt inflated. The remainder were unaware of the existence of a debt associated with their labour migration to Singapore until

after they had reached their destination. Debt bondage forced many participants into prostitution, and forced others to perform sex work under degrading, harmful and exploitative conditions. Often these situations had a negative physical and emotional impact on the victims.

Victims of trafficking for sexual purposes left exploitative situations, according to the field level research, in four different ways: 1) they simply finished their 'contracts' and returned to their home countries; 2) they were rescued and/or assisted in their exit by an NGO; 3) they escaped using their own independent agency and volition; or 4) they were picked up during a police raid and subsequently detained and deported.

The field research has also found that, while many of the elements of trafficking for sexual exploitation identified are common to a range of destination countries both within the Asian region and elsewhere, the Singapore Government is an exception in that it has not yet acknowledged that trafficking of minors or adults for commercial sexual exploitation exists (either at all, or on any significant scale). This lack of recognition seriously compromises the protection of women, as well as children and young people, and ultimately results in ineffective responses and solutions. The persistence of responses that utilise raids, detention and deportation as key mechanisms to control migrant prostitution in Singapore is seriously flawed in its failure to recognise and protect victims and, indeed, can act to further compromise their human rights.

3. Other forms of child sexual exploitation affecting Singapore

3.1 Child prostitution

The preliminary desktop review shed light on other forms of sexual exploitation affecting Singapore. In addition to foreign trafficked girls, the review notes that child prostitution also involves children and young people from Singapore. As in other Asian countries (such as Japan and Taiwan), it was observed that an increasing number of Singaporean teenagers are exchanging sexual services to access modern goods or simply make extra pocket money, using the Internet or mobile phones to advertise and facilitate the setting up of sexual encounters. This form of prostitution, known by its Japanese name as '*enjo kosa*' (or 'compensated dating'), is usually occasional and appears to affect both girls and

boys. According to counselors and social workers, some young people feel pushed to sell sex services in order to buy consumer products such as mobile phones, the latest fashions or recreational gadgets. Others may need to feed themselves after running away from home, or may be induced to engage in commercial sex as a result of peer influence, the pervasive sexualisation of children in the media or simple curiosity. Nevertheless, the understanding of *enjo-kosai* in Singapore and its various contributing factors has been assessed as being generally insufficient.

3.2 Child pornography and online sexual exploitation of children

The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by Singapore teenagers has resulted, not only in a rise in *enjo-kosai*, but also in more harm to children in terms of sexual exploitation. In addition to documenting risky behaviours such as chatting with strangers and giving out personal information online, a number of surveys and media reports analysed for the literature review have pointed to voluntary and involuntary access to mainstream pornography by children of all ages, and to widespread use of chat rooms and social networking websites to groom children for online and offline sexual abuse, as well as for the production and dissemination of child abuse images.

3.3 Sexual exploitation of children in tourism

The desktop research noted that some Singaporean citizens engage in sexual acts with children during their trips abroad, but confirmed that no empirical data currently exists to conclude that the city-state is a significant contributor to child sex tourism regionally and beyond (although Indonesian respondents in the field level component of the research identified a large number of their 'clients' as Singaporeans). Furthermore, several studies, documentaries and news articles have identified the Indonesian Riau Archipelago, especially Batam, as one of the main destinations for Singaporean child sex tourists. In many cases these are working-class men in search of commercial sex, attracted to the comparatively lower prices of sex services. Other known destinations for Singaporean travelling sex offenders were found to be Cambodia and Thailand (especially the southern part of the country).

4. Addressing child sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations: main areas of concern

4.1 National Plans of Action

While the multifaceted and complex nature of commercial sexual exploitation of children requires a wide response involving a range of actors working together around a common platform for action, the review highlighted that child trafficking for CSE and other forms of CSEC have not been properly acknowledged by the Government as a problem affecting the country. Singapore has not yet drafted a national plan to combat the various forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children, nor has it adopted a multidimensional strategy on child protection or a national plan on human trafficking, which would include targeted measures against child trafficking for CSE.

4.2 Coordination and cooperation

Singapore has taken steps to improve national coordination on child protection issues, but very little focus has been given to the commercial sexual exploitation of children specifically. Some progress has been noted, including in terms of inter-agency coordination in managing trafficking and child abuse cases, including sexual exploitation, as well as in providing support services to victims. Similarly, mechanisms for enhanced cooperation among government ministries, the private sector, media and representatives of civil society have been set up with a view to enabling and supporting concrete action to promote safer use of ICTs (examples are the Internet and Media Advisory Committee and the newly established Inter-Ministry Cyber-wellness Steering Committee). Nevertheless, cooperative efforts remain limited, especially with regard to information exchange on potential child trafficking cases between government agencies, NGOs and foreign diplomatic missions in Singapore. The field research confirmed this finding, highlighting that the victims' disclosures of experiences with police, immigration officials and other government authorities in Singapore (and in some cases in their home countries) post-exit indicate the need for a more coordinated response to the problem. Such a response can only happen if a framework for child protection and combating human trafficking is put in place and implemented.

At the international and regional levels, Singapore has taken part in a limited number of initiatives to improve police and judicial collaboration (mainly through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations - ASEAN), focusing mostly on human trafficking and security issues such as cybercrime. However, bilateral partnerships with sending countries of child sex trafficking victims are still lacking. Equally, cooperation

with foreign governments to institutionalise procedures for reporting, investigating and prosecuting child sex tourism committed overseas by Singaporean citizens and permanent residents has not been adequately pursued, resulting in insufficient convictions of travelling sex offenders.

4.3 Prevention measures

The desktop research has found that measures to prevent trafficking for sexual purposes in Singapore are limited and very general, with little or no focus on children (especially in terms of awareness-raising). However, measures to prevent other manifestations of CSEC have resulted in some good practices. For example, a great deal of effort has been devoted to building a safer environment on the Internet and reducing the risks of online sexual exploitation of children. The Government of Singapore has also adopted a system to block access to illegal websites, including those containing child pornography. It has also encouraged industry self-regulation and allocated funds for online safety awareness through education initiatives directed at the public and children specifically. Particularly relevant has been the role played by the IT industry in fighting the crime of child sexual exploitation and the proliferation of child abuse images. One commendable initiative was the creation in 2007 of a financial coalition against child pornography, which includes the Association of Banks in Singapore and its credit card issuing member banks. The coalition aims to support the global effort to identify commercial sources of child abuse images and cut off the flow of funds that support their dissemination.

Initiatives to prevent child sex tourism have also been undertaken by the Singapore Government and UN agencies (for example, participation in the ASEAN campaign entitled 'Combating Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia', aimed at raising awareness and deterring potential child sex offenders), but these tend to remain isolated and are not necessarily sustained. More importantly, other CSEC manifestations, especially child prostitution and child trafficking for sexual purposes, have been neglected. As a result, the particular socio-economic and interpersonal factors pushing Singaporean children to engage in prostitution and pushing children from other countries to migrate to Singapore, as well as the demand for sex with children generated both by local and foreign sex exploiters, have not been addressed.

4.4 Support services for sexually exploited children, including child victims of sex trafficking

Another area which requires further improvement is the recovery and reintegration of child victims. While individualised case management has been developed to guarantee effective and comprehensive assistance tailored to the specific situation of each child victim, the desktop review exposed a paucity of specialised support services catering to the special needs of trafficked children and child victims of sexual exploitation, including the absence of dedicated shelters operated by the Government for these particular groups of children and young people. The field research has also found that NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) are often aware that trafficking of young people into Singapore's sex industry is occurring, but lack the capacity to respond to victims' needs. Because of a complete lack of understanding of CSEC victimology, victims that come into contact with a Government authority, NGO or CSO in Singapore are rarely recognized as such and, consequently, do not receive the appropriate support, and typically get deported.

5. The legal framework: progress and remaining challenges

Some success has been achieved in ensuring an effective legal framework against CSEC crimes, but a number of legal loopholes still exist. Recently, the city-state has amended its legislation to enhance protection of children by making it an offence for a person to obtain sexual services for consideration from another person who is under 18 years of age (increased from 16 years of age). It is also a crime to commit such an act overseas. A number of provisions to deter activities facilitating child sex tourism and punish sexual grooming have also been enacted. At the same time, legislation on child prostitution is not comprehensive enough, as protection is afforded only to girls, leaving boys unprotected. Furthermore, the legal framework against child sex trafficking is not completely in line with the requirements of the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Trafficking Protocol)* because not all acts constituting child trafficking are punished regardless of whether the final exploitation occurs. In addition, effective legal protection of children victimised by sex trafficking is hindered by the lack of available redress and compensation. The review notes that Singapore has not yet signed nor ratified any of the relevant

international instruments against trafficking and child sexual exploitation.

Efforts to establish a child-friendly environment during investigations has been promoted. Apart from creating the Serious Sexual Crime Branch under the Singapore Police Force, in which the officers are reportedly trained to investigate particular sex crimes and to appropriately conduct interviews with victims of CSEC, procedures to prevent re-victimisation of children during investigations have been adopted. In particular, efforts are being made to avoid repeated interviews and to develop individual care plans in collaboration with social workers and psychologists. In addition, the desktop research identified a number of initiatives to build the capacity of law enforcers to investigate human trafficking and child abuse, including child sexual exploitation. However, some obstacles were noted in this area, particularly with regard to the non-identification and consequent criminalisation and deportation of foreign child victims of sex trafficking.

6. Priority actions required

6

Based on the findings of the desktop review and field research, the final section of the report presents a number of recommendations to be implemented in the coming years. These recommendations are aimed at improving current strategies and policies to strengthen protection of children from sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations and would most likely be phased and implemented under a multi-year approach.

Respondents in the field research provided important insights about what would have enhanced their ability to exit their exploitative situations in Singapore in a way that would not have rendered them more vulnerable. For example, prevention and protection efforts need to take into account the different social and economic contexts in sending countries that produce vulnerability and present opportunities for recruiters and traffickers to exploit that vulnerability through deceptive recruitment practices and false promises. The field research also identified several initial steps that are vital for combating child sex trafficking in the destination country, as well as upon return to the victim's home country.

The presence of sex trafficking in Singapore has not yet been adequately recognised as a problem and as such results in a lack of awareness and knowledge on the necessary measures that need to be adopted to: reduce vulnerability of potential victims; ensure appropriate identification of victims; improve the prosecution of procurers, traffickers and others involved; and to provide appropriate care and assistance for the victims.

All victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation should have access to:

- Advice about their rights and avenues for support, both while in and after exiting their exploitative situations;
- Physical and emotional support and health care;
- Appropriate treatment by governmental authorities and other support organisations, including an appropriate immigration status;
- Appropriate embassy/consulate support to ensure appropriate provision of initial support services including during and following the repatriation process
- Spaces where they are not re-victimised and where reflection and recovery is possible, such as dedicated and appropriate shelters;
- Compensation for abuses suffered during their trafficking experiences.

Regardless of differences in nationality and venues of exploitation in Singapore, the main actions that are recommended in relation to combating trafficking of children and youth are:

- Adopt a national plan of action (NPA) on child protection to include targeted measures against sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations. The plan should incorporate comprehensive measures and should be coordinated by a dedicated inter-ministerial child protection body. The plan should bring together all relevant key stakeholders who are familiar with the issues of children's rights and sexual exploitation of children.
- Sensitisation campaigns targeting the general public in Singapore to inform about the existence of sex trafficking, including specifics on trafficking of children for sexual purposes should be conducted and hosted by relevant government agencies, in collaboration with other key stakeholders.
- Enhance efforts to identify child trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, such as children arrested for pimping and public solicitation, or as undocumented migrants, in order to ensure that child victims of trafficking are not criminalised/punished in any way, re-traumatised

or neglected. Moreover, funds must be allocated to provide specialised training of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges, social workers and other relevant officials to further understanding of children's rights and child-friendly procedures in order to ensure children's rights to protection, as well as increase convictions and prosecutions for child trafficking for sexual exploitation.

- Develop specialised support services for child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Such services may include:
 - a. Operation of a specific helpline;
 - b. Development of support shelters especially for children;
 - c. Provision of specialised counselling and psychosocial therapy for child victims;
 - d. Improved access to health care and services (currently, they are only available to child victims that have been officially recognised as victims of trafficking).
- Ratify both the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol)* and the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* in order to eliminate a major loophole in the framework to protect children from child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. In addition to ratifying both international instruments, Singapore must create a stronger framework to protect children by harmonising national laws that are not currently in line with international standards. In particular, Singapore must amend the definition of child trafficking (for example, by criminalising the act of purchasing sex services from any person under 18), provide harsher penalties for child trafficking offences and engage in stricter enforcement of these laws.

Introduction

There is no existing research on human trafficking for any purpose in the Singaporean context. Some NGOs and academics have collected anecdotal evidence of the presence of elements of human trafficking in three sectors: male migrant workers in construction and shipping (collected by TWC2); female migrant workers in paid domestic work (collected by HOME); and Vietnamese marriage migrants (collected as part of an academic study by a project team based at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore). The information collected by these NGOs and academics, while valuable, does not specifically address trafficking nor, importantly for this study, trafficking for CSE where children and young people may be involved. Voluntary sex workers and women and minors deployed in the sex industry through non-voluntary processes remain sorely neglected, although migrant worker/migrant bride human rights are increasingly subject to public discussion and scrutiny within civil society and academia in Singapore. Two reasons are likely for this lack of attention: first, negative stereotypes and misperceptions about migrants in Singapore's sex industry abound, including the view that all such migrants are "prostitutes", and a failure to distinguish between prostitution and sex trafficking; second, difficulty in accessing victims of trafficking for CSE.

In July 2008, in response to questions raised in Parliament regarding Singapore's Tier Two ranking by the United States Department of State (DoS) Annual Trafficking in Persons Report (US DoS 2008), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) vigorously rebutted the charges levelled against the government as to the adequacy of its responses to human trafficking. Key to the MHA's response was a lack of evidence that human trafficking was occurring on any notable scale in Singapore. The response also stressed the fact that Singapore already has numerous provisions in its Penal Code, Women's Charter, Children and Young Person's Act and Labour Code that respectively address criminality within human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) of minors.

The current lack of knowledge is not limited to child sex trafficking, but extends to other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children affecting Singapore. For example, Singaporean men cross into neighbouring countries, such as Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand, and sexually exploit children who are trafficked or lured into commercial sexual exploitation situations. The involvement of Singaporean children and young people in prostitution and online sexual exploitation is equally creating concern, but, so far, has received only limited consideration on the part of the Government and NGOs.

In 2008, Singapore participated in the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and, together with 136 other governments, committed to *The Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (Rio Call for Action)*. The Rio Call for Action details a general plan of action to enhance the protection of children from sexual exploitation and builds on the *Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action* against commercial sexual exploitation of children and the *Yokohama Global Commitment*, which reaffirmed the commitments made in Stockholm. Among other key issues, the *Rio Call for Action* notes a deep concern for "the increased vulnerability of many children to sexual exploitation" as a result of several factors, including "the persistent demand for sex with children in all regions and States underpinned by an environment of social tolerance, complicity and impunity". *The Rio Call for Action* also noted that "there continues to be a lack of reliable, disaggregated data on the prevalence and nature of sexual exploitation of children" and called on stakeholders to initiate and support more qualitative and quantitative research on the issue.

Taking into account this recent commitment and the paucity of research, this situational analysis seeks to expand the present knowledge base, focusing mostly on the commercial sexual exploitation of children through unsafe migration and/or human trafficking, while also providing an initial insight into the other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children identified in Singapore (namely child prostitution, child pornography and child sex tourism).

General objectives and methodological approach

General objectives and methodological approach:

- Document the existing situation of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Singapore, with a focus on child sex trafficking;
- Ascertain the dimensions and *modus operandi* of child sex trafficking, as well as the characteristics of child sex trafficking victims;
- Analyse government, civil society and country-based international organisation responsibilities, related interventions and the level of coordination within the country and across borders to address commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- Identify targeted recommendations for action for key actors to prevent and protect children from being sexually exploited, especially through sex trafficking;
- Act as a catalyst for follow-up activities to the research report.

This research report presents the main findings of a two-phase study, which was conducted between August 2009 and April 2010.

During the first phase (August 2009 – October 2009), a literature review was undertaken on the country situation with regard to CSEC. Besides an overview of the main child protection issues and the context leading to commercial sexual exploitation, the desktop research explores the main features of the different manifestations of CSEC, with a particular emphasis on child sex trafficking. It also analyses efforts promoted by the Government, NGOs, international organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders in the areas of prevention, coordination and assistance, and provides a technical review of the related legal framework. The literature review is based solely on secondary data from various sources, including national statistics; academic and other relevant research reports; media articles; search engines; and blogs.

During the second phase (October 2009 – April 2010), field research was carried out using a mixed methodology, comprised of qualitative components (semi-structured interviews with victims and key informants, and informal interactions with other stakeholders, including pimps and sex workers) and a quantitative component (surveys of women and minors who have been trafficked to Singapore). A total of 111 in-depth interviews with female adults and minors who had been trafficked to Singapore within the last two years (between early 2008 and early 2010) were conducted. The field level research drew on human rights and child-centred research principles. This approach is based on the premise that research should be designed and conducted with special consideration for the vulnerability of the subjects and that research protocols should aim to produce outcomes that have the potential to enhance their rights. Such an approach also acknowledges that all people, including vulnerable children and young people, have the right to the conditions necessary for their survival and development, and that this recognition is connected with the duties and responsibilities of states under international conventions, such as the *Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)*, and various national laws (for more information on specific objectives, methodology, sites, ethics and limitations of the field research, see sections 4.1. and 4.2).

Commercial sexual exploitation of children:

defining and understanding

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) encompasses criminal practices that demean and threaten the physical and psychosocial integrity of children. The *Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action* against commercial sexual exploitation of children defines CSEC as a “fundamental violation of children’s rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.”¹

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The primary, interrelated forms of CSEC are prostitution of children, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes. Other forms include child sex tourism, and in some cases, child marriage. Children can also be commercially sexually exploited in other, less obvious ways, such as through domestic servitude or bonded labour. In these cases, a child is contracted to provide work, but the employer believes that the child can also be used for sexual purposes.²

The following are the definitions of the different manifestations of CSEC adopted for the purposes of this study:

Child trafficking: Article 3 of the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol)*, *Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) states:

“(a) ‘Trafficking in persons’ shall mean “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person,

for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered ‘trafficking in persons’ even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article; and

(d) ‘Child’ shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.”

Based on this definition, *child trafficking can be identified as a process where a child (who is defined as a person under 18 years of age) is recruited, transported, transferred, harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, even if the child consented to these actions.* The irrelevance of the consent of the child constitutes an important difference from trafficking of adults, the latter of which requires the use of coercive means or trickery in order to consider them as victims of trafficking. When children are involved, it is recognised that, due to their age and developmental stages, they cannot be considered willing participants in their own trafficking. In the specific case of child sex trafficking, this means that every time a child is recruited, transported, etc for sexual exploitation (including prostitution, the making of pornography and forced marriage), he/she should be considered a victim and afforded the necessary protection³.

Child prostitution: Article 2(b) of the *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Optional Protocol)* defines child prostitution as “the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”.

Thus, the prostitution of children occurs when someone benefits from a commercial transaction in which a child is made available for sexual purposes. Children may be controlled by an intermediary who manages or oversees the transaction, or by a sex exploiter, who negotiates directly with the child. Children are also involved in prostitution when they engage in sex in return for basic needs such as food, shelter or safety; for favours, such as higher grades at school; or for extra pocket money to purchase consumer goods. These acts may occur in many different locations, such as brothels, bars, clubs, homes, hotels or on the street. The key issue is not that children make a choice to engage in prostitution in order to survive or to buy more consumer goods, but that they are driven by circumstances, influenced by acquaintances and peers, as well as social norms and values, and otherwise pushed into situations in which adults take advantage of their vulnerability to sexually exploit and abuse them. In this sense, the terms 'child prostitute' and 'child sex worker' do not reflect reality because they imply that the child has somehow chosen prostitution as a profession. It is adults who create 'child prostitution' through their demand for children as sexual objects, their misuse of power and their desire for profit; as such, children are victims of abuse rather than 'sex workers'⁴.

Child pornography: According to Article 2(c) of the *Optional Protocol* "Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes".

The *Optional Protocol* definition of child pornography is broad and covers material showing explicit sexual activities involving children, whether real or simulated, and material displaying the sexual parts of a child intended for primarily sexual purposes. Child pornography includes photographs, visual and audio representations and writings, and can be distributed through magazines, books, drawings, movies, videotapes, mobile phones and computer disks or files. Generally speaking, there are two categories of pornography: that which is not sexually explicit, but involves naked and seductive images of children, and that which presents images of children engaged in sexual activity. The use of children in either way is sexual exploitation, but existing international legal standards only criminalise the latter⁵.

In recent years there has been a shift in terminology from 'child pornography' to 'child abuse imagery' to reinforce the

fact that behind the images of child pornography there is abuse of real children taking place. While the term 'abusive images' is now common among those who advocate for children's rights in relation to sexual abuse through photography, the term 'child pornography' is consistently used in the majority of laws and policy documents internationally⁶.

Child sex tourism: "Child sex tourism is the commercial sexual exploitation of children by people who travel from one location to another and there engage in sexual acts with minors. Often, they travel from a richer country to one that is less developed, but child-sex tourists may also be travellers within their own countries or region. [...] Child-sex tourists come from all walks of life: they may be married or single, male or female, wealthy tourists or budget travellers. Some child-sex tourists (preferential abusers and paedophiles) target children specifically; most, however, are situational abusers who do not usually have a sexual preference for children but take advantage of a situation in which a child is made available to them."⁷

Child marriage: Child marriage, or early marriage, involves the marriage of children and adolescents below the age of 18. It can be considered as a form of commercial sexual exploitation when a child is received and used for sexual purposes in exchange for goods or payment in cash or kind⁸.

ANALYSING THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

1.1 Social and economic background information on Singapore

Geopolitical situation and history

Singapore is an island city-state located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, bordering the Malaysian state of Johor to the north, and Indonesia's Riau Islands to the south. With its 710.2 square kilometres of land area⁹ and 63 islands, including mainland Singapore, it is the smallest nation in southeast Asia. From 1819 to 1963, the island was under British colonial rule and was one of the most important commercial and military centres in the British Empire. When Singapore gained independence from Britain it merged with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak to form Malaysia. However, the merger proved unsuccessful, and, less than two years later, it seceded from the federation and became an independent republic within the Commonwealth of Nations on 9 August 1965¹⁰.

Singapore is a representative democracy with an elected parliamentary system of government¹¹. The People's Action Party (PAP) dominates the political process and has won control of Parliament in every election since 1959, when internal self-government was granted by the British.

Singapore is a member of many international organisations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Population and human development

With an estimated population of almost 5 million (as of 2009), Singapore is a densely populated independent country. Singapore is highly cosmopolitan and diverse, with Chinese people forming an ethnic majority (around 77%) and large populations of Malay, Indian and other people¹². This plurality of ethnicity is reflected in the languages spoken: Malay is the national language, but Mandarin, Tamil and English are also designated as official languages. English is the main language and has been heavily promoted as such since the country's independence. Presently, it is used for education, business and government affairs.

Children up to 14 years of age make up 18.9% of the population, while the elderly (over 65) account for 8.5%¹³. In 2008, the total fertility rate was only 1.28 children per woman¹⁴, and well below the 2.10 needed to replace the population. To overcome this problem, the Government is encouraging foreigners to immigrate to Singapore. These large numbers of immigrants have kept Singapore's population from declining.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) classification, Singapore is included under the category of countries with a high level of human development. In 2006, it ranked 28th among 179 countries on the Human Development Index¹⁵. The literacy rate among the adult population, as of 2006, was 94.2%, while total life expectancy for the country at birth was 79.7 years (77.7 years for men and 81.6 years for women)¹⁶.

Economy

As one of the 'East Asian Tigers', Singapore has a highly developed and successful free market economy. It enjoys a remarkably open and corruption-free environment, stable prices and a per capita GDP higher than that of most developed countries (in 2008 it ranked eighth out of 153 countries analysed). Less than five percent of Singapore's land is used for agriculture, and its contribution to GDP is negligible. In 2008, services and industry contributed 66.8% and 33.2%, respectively, to Singapore's GDP. Singapore

is one of the world's greatest commercial centres, with a large, modern port. Commerce has historically been the chief source of income. The economy depends heavily on exports, particularly consumer electronics, information technology products and pharmaceuticals, and on a growing service sector.

The present economic downturn is heavily impacting the country's economic outlook. Real GDP growth averaged 8.4 percent between 2004 and 2007, but dropped to 1.8% in 2008 as a result of the global financial crisis. The economy further contracted in the first two quarters of 2009, with the overall unemployment rate rising from 2.8% in June 2008 to 4.2% in June 2009. This critical situation is exposing an increasing number of families to various economic difficulties and Prime Minister Lee and other senior officials have dampened expectations for a quick rebound. Over the longer term, the Government hopes to establish a new growth path that will be less vulnerable to global demand cycles, especially for information technology products - it has attracted major investments in pharmaceuticals and medical technology production - and it will continue efforts to establish Singapore as Southeast Asia's financial and high-tech hub.

Education and other basic indicators concerning children

Children in Singapore enjoy a good standard of health care and the country is ranked very high in the UNICEF report, 'The State of the World's Children 2009, for having the lowest estimated under-five mortality rate in 2007 and a high life expectancy at birth. Cases of children being affected by HIV/AIDS or orphaned by the disease are rare.

Education constitutes an important pillar of Singaporean society. With the implementation of the *Compulsory Education Bill* (2000) in 2003, all children must attend at least six years of primary education in national schools. Since 1987 English has been the language of instruction, but a policy of bilingualism requires that children also be taught Chinese, Malay or Tamil. At the secondary level, students have a choice of three courses designed to match their learning abilities and interests. Children undergo four or five years of secondary education with different curricular emphases²⁴. In 2003, the net enrollment rate at the primary stage (ages six to 11) was 94% and at the secondary stage

(ages 12 to 15) was 93%²⁵. The dropout rate in Singapore is very low and has been decreasing considerably, from 5.3% in 1997 to 1.6% in 2008. The decrease reflects improvements at all levels and amongst students of all ethnic groups²⁶.

A 2001 UNICEF Survey reported that the majority of children in Singapore were doing well emotionally and that two-thirds of the children were happy most of the time. However, two main causes of stress or unhappiness among the children were failing in exams or not being able to perform to the expectations of parents and school. Critics of Singapore's education system say that it puts too much pressure on children. While some authors stress that Singapore's system is too results-oriented, exam-focused and competitive, others believe that it is the parents who put excessive pressure on children to learn academic skills at a very young age. Despite the high living standard and the quality of educational opportunities enjoyed by children in Singapore, the rising number of suicide cases among teenagers (due to stress and an inability to deal with school pressures, relationships with parents and peers) has been identified as an area for concern²⁷.

1.2 Main child protection issues and context leading to commercial sexual exploitation of children

Being a small affluent city-state, where people are the only natural resource, Singapore depends on its people to stay competitive in the world. As such, children are valued as the country's greatest asset and future citizens. Great importance is placed on their well-being, health, education and development, regardless of their race, religion or socio-economic background. Singapore's accession to the CRC in October 1995 demonstrates the Government's commitment to upholding child rights and protecting children from various risks and violations, including abuse and exploitation²⁸.

In Singapore, the family is considered to be the most natural environment for nurturing the young. Several pro-family policies and programmes have been implemented to support and empower the family unit. The Government has also made efforts to create a violence-free environment. Social legislation exists to protect children and young people, as well as victims of violence. Child protection services are

provided widely and aim to ensure the safety of children while strengthening, where possible, the parent-child relationship²⁹.

Despite the fact that provisions for the protection of children and victims of violence have been adopted, a number of problems and issues are challenging the Singaporean society. These challenges impact Singapore's ability to fully protect children's rights, as well as increase children's vulnerability to various forms of exploitation, including commercial sexual exploitation of children.

In most countries worldwide, sexual abuse, violence and neglect (often perpetrated by parents, family or members of the child's community) leave children vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to lack of protection by caring adults. If forced to leave home, children can become increasingly at-risk due to peer pressure, desperation or fear. Despite the paucity of research on vulnerability factors contributing to child sexual exploitation in Singapore, the role played by various forms of child abuse in determining the occurrence of this crime is likely to be significant.

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The Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports (MCYS), the lead Singaporean government agency dealing with children's issues, defines child abuse as "any act of commission or omission by a parent or guardian which would endanger or impair the child's physical or emotional well-being [...]. Child abuse includes Physical Abuse, Neglect, Sexual Abuse, Emotional and Psychological Abuse"³⁰. Since 1999, MCYS has maintained a centralised database with statistics about different types of abuse. The data collected by this agency shows that many children in Singapore are suffering from different violations, which require targeted attention and responses.

1.2.1 Domestic violence

As attested to by a number of studies published in the last few years, several forms of violence (emotional, sexual, physical, neglect, etc) are being experienced by Singaporean children and young people within the family context, resulting in devastating consequences for their well-being.

One study of family violence incidents occurring between 2003 and 2004 found that in 32% of the 1918 cases

analysed, minors³¹ (especially those aged below 10 years) were either directly involved in the violence or had witnessed the incidents. In 81% of these cases, the children tried to intervene in various ways, such as calling the police or stopping the parents from fighting. Sixty-eight percent of children were hurt in the process of intervening. The most common form of family violence reported was physical assault (42% of cases), followed by multiple forms of violence (26%) and threats (18%)³².

In 2003, MCYS commissioned a study on public perceptions of family violence. This was followed by a second research study, carried out in 2007, to measure shifts in public perceptions of this form of abuse. With regard to family violence involving children, the 2007 survey, similar to the 2003 study, found that only a small percentage of Singaporeans thought it was acceptable for a parent to hit their children while under the influence of drugs/alcohol or due to stress. In 2007, slightly more than half of the respondents agreed that a single parent is more likely to vent his/her frustration on a child; an increase from 2003. More also agreed that disabled children are more likely to be abused. Taken together, these two studies show an increased awareness of the factors that increase the vulnerability of children to family violence³³.

The different forms of domestic abuse affecting Singaporean children were also analysed in a study by the Subordinate Courts, published in 2004. Based on 120 cases of children and young people who were brought to the Juvenile Court for care and protection, the survey revealed that 85% of cases involved victims of neglect, followed by emotional/psychological abuse (35%) and sexual abuse (10%). Children three and under formed the majority (26%) of victims, followed by 19% each for the age groups seven to nine and 13 to 14. In terms of ethnicity, Chinese accounted for the largest group (47%), followed by Malays (29%), Indians (20%) and others (four percent). An analysis of pre-existing family stressors showed that 45% of the children had financial difficulties and 28% of families had marital problems. Other concerns increasing the vulnerability of children to domestic abuse were lack of social support, involvement of family members in criminal activities and alcohol/drug abuse³⁴.

Emotional/psychological abuse was identified as a problem for Singapore many years ago and was legally recognised as a form of abuse in 2001. As shown by a study published in

2002 by the Singapore Children's Society, despite reported cases of emotional maltreatment being very limited, a number of social trends existed that potentially reflected emotional abuse. These social trends included an increase in suicides among children and teens due to fear of examinations, anger over being scolded and the pain of being rejected in love, as well as a rise in the number of children/adolescents seeking psychiatric treatment³⁵.

1.2.2 Child sexual abuse

Presently, there are no in-depth studies on the extent of child sexual abuse in Singapore. However, various media articles recently released have pointed to the seriousness of this crime and its spread into Singaporean society. Figures made available by MCYS to the newspaper *The Sunday Times* show that in 2008 MCYS found evidence of sexual abuse in approximately 50 cases, up from 15 in 2000. The proportion of sexual abuse incidents also increased sharply, accounting for nearly 45% of all abuse cases detected in 2008, up from 25% in 2000. About 70% of the sexual abuse reports made to MCYS came through schools, up from 35% in 2004. Noted that these figures pertain only to cases where the child was abused by a family member at home³⁶.

Overall data on the number of child sex abuse cases (within and outside of the family) is kept by the police, but has not been released due to the "sensitive nature of the information". According to the president of advocacy group, Society Against Family Violence, the real number of cases could be three to four times higher than the numbers reported to the police. As in many other countries, the shame and stigma associated with sexual abuse makes it difficult for victims to come forward. On the other hand, a representative of MCYS has stressed that, in the absence of a formal study, it is difficult to say why the number of cases - particularly those involving sexual abuse - has increased. It is possible that increased public awareness and enhanced cross-agency training to help key partners identify child abuse symptoms more accurately have resulted in an increasing number of cases being detected³⁷.

While intra-familial child sexual abuse exists, a high proportion of cases also occur outside of the domestic setting. Mentioning figures of the Ministry of Home Affairs, a Singapore Children's Society research paper published in 2003 noted that an average of 240 sexual offences against children were registered every year between 1999 and 2002. Of these, only 16% were perpetrated by parents,

relatives or other caregivers. The vast majority of the cases presumably involved people known but not related to the child or outsiders (eg, friends, boyfriends, acquaintances, school mates and classmates)³⁸.

More recent data seems to confirm this. A study done by medical social workers at KK Women's and Children's Hospital showed that of the 93 child sex abuse cases that the hospital saw in 2007, nearly 60% were perpetrated by people not related to the child. The study looked at children aged 16 and below. Younger children were more likely to be abused, the study showed, with 39% of the victims aged six years and below. The youngest victim was two-years-old³⁹.

The main demographic characteristics of child victims and perpetrators are also described in the few existing research reports on this topic. According to the 2003 Singapore Children's Society research mentioned above, in 2002, slightly over 70% of the cases of sexual abuse registered by MCDS (now MCYS) involved children aged 12 and above. In terms of race, Malay children appeared to be over-represented, but whether this reflected socio-economic variables, ethnic differences in willingness to report or some genuine difference in actual incidence was impossible to say. With regard to gender, the same study revealed that the majority of the 256 cases of child sexual abuse registered by the Ministry of Home Affairs concerned girls, with only 12% involving boys⁴⁰.

Another piece of research done by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) on child sexual abuse in Singapore found that out of the 38 cases the clinic saw in 2001, most of them concerned young children (74% below age nine) and females (78.9%). As for the gender of perpetrators, they were all male except two female domestic maids⁴¹.

A recent study by MCYS that profiled those who sexually abuse teenagers and children shows that in one in three cases, the crime is preceded by practices to gain the children's trust. Compiled by psychologist, Jennifer Teoh, the publication is the result of interviews with 84 young offenders aged between 12 and 21, most of whom were on probation after being charged in court. According to this research, before 'acting' the abuse, offenders often 'groom' the children by befriending them in various ways⁴².

A smaller survey of 20 adults who molested children related to them confirmed the use of this tactic, finding that around six in 10 'groomed' the child before abusing him/her. Common grooming methods include showering victims with gifts and affection that involves frequent physical contact, such as making them sit on their laps, giving them piggyback rides or even indulging in games such as wrestling⁴³.

1.2.3 Bullying in schools

Another form of violence that is affecting children and youth in Singapore is bullying in schools. Although the link between this practice and child sexual exploitation has not yet been explored, cases of sexual bullying and harassment in the classroom, especially against teenage girls, have been reported in the media, demonstrating that the problem exists and deserves further analysis⁴⁴.

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That bullying occurs among students in primary and secondary schools in Singapore has been confirmed by research published in 2008 by the Singapore Children's Society. According to this research, approximately one in four secondary school students, and one in five primary school pupils surveyed (1299 students in total) were bullied by their peers. Smaller proportions of students from both types of schools also admitted to bullying others (10% of secondary and five percent of primary school students surveyed), though the frequency and nature of their aggression was not known. With regard to the nature of the bullying, the research found that verbal bullying, particularly hurtful or vulgar name-calling, was most prevalent among students, while cyber-bullying was least common. The majority of bullies in primary and secondary schools, as identified by the victims, were boys. And most bullies, boys or girls, targeted students of the same gender. The tendency for same-gender bullying makes sense when we consider the patterns of child and adolescent friendships and the different gender roles that boys and girls are expected to play. Bullies in both primary and secondary schools were also mainly targeting students of the same ethnicity. However, it was found that primary school Indians were subjects to racial taunts more often, although they were not bullied more because of their race⁴⁵.

OVERVIEW OF CHILD TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN SINGAPORE

A review of existing literature on the different manifestations of CSEC in Singapore has revealed a lack of specific studies and reliable data on these crimes. At the World Congress III in Brazil the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports recalled that “Singapore has made strides to better protect children against sexual exploitation”⁴⁶, however, no government-funded research has been carried out in recent years, nor have official statistics been developed. This lack of research shows that, in fact, attention to these illegal practices remains limited.

While current documentation does not allow for a clear picture of CSEC in the country, various media and NGO reports indicate that an unknown number of children and young people are exploited through prostitution, pornography and trafficking for sexual purposes. Child sex tourism, as practiced by Singaporean nationals in foreign destinations, is also problematic. As in many other countries of the world, the various manifestations of CSEC appear increasingly interlinked, especially in the case of child abuse materials and online sexual exploitation of children.

2.1. Child trafficking for sexual purposes

Singapore is a key destination country in the ASEAN region for labour migration and migration for sex-related work, including trafficking of women and girls for sexual purposes. The US Department of State’s report on human trafficking has noted that the city-state has had a “significant” trafficking problem involving women and children since 2004⁴⁷. The Government of Singapore has always refuted these findings, calling the report a “gross distortion of reality”⁴⁸.

Numbers and trends: Reliable figures on child victims of trafficking for sexual purposes in Singapore are difficult to obtain due to a lack of disaggregated data and the hidden and illegal nature of the crime. This also makes it difficult to identify trends in the development of the phenomenon. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a total of 111 cases of trafficking in women and girls were investigated in Singapore between 2004 and 2007⁴⁹. However, it is not possible to say how many of these cases concerned underage girls trafficked for sexual exploitation as the information is not disaggregated by age. The data provided by the Government shows a decrease in investigations over the last few years, dropping from 35 in 2005 to 28 in 2007. Of note, out of the 28 cases investigated in 2007, only one resulted in a prosecution⁵⁰.

The 2008 US Department of State human trafficking report also provides figures on prosecutions for trafficking. According to this source, in 2007 the police arrested 5402 foreign women for prostitution, who were generally incarcerated and then deported. The number of trafficking victims among this group is unknown. At least 60 of those who were reportedly arrested and deported without being formally identified and provided with appropriate protective services were minors⁵¹. The latest report, published this year, found that in 2008 the Singapore Police Force investigated 54 reports of sex trafficking, but only two cases resulted in prosecutions. The other cases were reportedly closed due to lack of substantiating evidence. The Government prosecuted and secured the convictions of two trafficking offenders in 2008, both

for sex trafficking offenses. One trafficker, who brought an underage Chinese girl to Singapore for commercial sexual exploitation, was sentenced to one year in prison⁵².

Some embassies in Singapore offering assistance to their nationals have provided additional data related to trafficking. For example⁵³, in 2007 the Thai Embassy recorded 17 cases of trafficking, while an embassy representative estimates that there are 1000 Thai women and girls working in Singapore's sex industry at any one time and 10% of them are likely to be victims of trafficking. In 2007 the Philippines Embassy recorded 212 trafficking cases, 27% of which involved the sex industry. Interestingly, this data shows a significant increase when compared to data from 2005 (59 cases) and 2006 (125 cases)⁵⁴.

Examining data from the US Department of State report, media articles and research on trafficking from other countries, it appears clear that Singapore is primarily a destination country (as opposed to a transit country) for children and young people trafficked into the sex industry. These children originate mainly from the People's Republic of China, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia. Cases of child trafficking for sexual purposes from Vietnam and India have additionally been reported. Cases of minors being trafficked through Singapore to other destinations in Europe or East Asia show that the country is also, to a lesser extent, a transit point for trafficking.

A number of sources and case studies substantiate these findings:

- Media reports published in 2004 denounced a 50% increase in *Chinese* women and girls involved in the sex market in Singapore. According to this source, the rise was due to relaxed immigration rules introduced that year, which doubled the number of days that Chinese can stay in the country to 30, and allowed more tour agencies to obtain visas. Furthermore, as Singapore is one of the wealthiest countries in Asia, with a population composed mainly of Chinese, the city-island is considered to be a natural magnet for migrants from China⁵⁵.
- The trafficking of women and girls from the *Philippines* was confirmed by a 2008 report of the Philippine Embassy in Singapore, which warned against the rising number of cases of Filipino workers being lured into the country by illegal recruiters with promises of decent pay, only to end up being exploited in prostitution or forced labour. The 57 victims of trafficking for sexual purposes registered by the embassy in 2008 had offered sex services in pubs, bars, as escorts and as "pickup girls". The report highlights that since the Government imposed strict regulations governing the deployment of entertainers to Japan, Singapore and other nearby countries (that do not require visas for entry) have become the favourite destinations of displaced entertainers.
- An extensive report published by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (Solidarity Center) found that Singapore is one of the primary destination countries for women and children trafficked from *Indonesia*. Victims ending up in the sex trade in the city-island come mainly from east, west and central Java, Bali, east Kalimantan and north Sulawesi. Usually, they go to Singapore to earn money as migrant domestic workers. Many of these women and children end up being trafficked into sex work or into domestic servitude or forced labour. There are also reports of women and children being trafficked into plantation or factory work. Other women and girls may choose to work in the sex industry in Singapore because they can earn more money than in Indonesia. Some of them may experience trafficking in the process, while others may not. Regardless of the migration/trafficking process for international sex work, the scope of this phenomenon remains unknown⁵⁷.
- A fact-finding mission to Malaysia and Singapore, undertaken in 2005 by the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre, revealed that trafficking of *Cambodian* women and children to both countries was a growing phenomenon, as reported in the media and by agencies providing assistance to trafficked women and children. The report also mentions the account of a 15-year-old Thai girl, trafficked from Thailand to Singapore, who disclosed that women and children of different nationalities were forced to provide sex to migrant workers in mobile camps and in forests near the Malay border. Since many Cambodian women and girls were forced into prostitution in Johor Baru (a town bordering Singapore), the authors of the report assumed that these trafficking victims were later shifted and/or smuggled across the border to provide sexual services to foreign and local male workers in Singapore⁵⁸.

- A number of recent media reports have pointed to the significant flow of women and girls being trafficked from *Thailand*, especially from the hill tribe ethnic minority groups. Some of these girls may expect to do non-sex work in massage parlours, karaoke clubs or discos, while others get engaged in prostitution in brothels or on the streets. Regardless, once they reach their destination, they usually end up being exploited in the sex trade under conditions that they were initially unaware of⁵⁹.

Trafficking of Sri Lankan children to Singapore

Four suspected racketeers, involved in the smuggling of more than 20 Sri Lankan children, were arrested in 2008. Parents of the children, alleged to have sold them for Rs1.8 million (US\$15,745) each, were also taken in for questioning. National Child Protection Authority chairperson, Jagath Wellawatta, reported that three of the children found abandoned at the Singapore airport were flown back to Sri Lanka⁶⁰.

- A report released at a human trafficking conference held in 2006 by the Government Office of *Vietnam* showed that trafficking of Vietnamese women and children to Singapore is a problem requiring urgent action. According to local police, some 153 women and children were rescued and repatriated in the first months of 2006, including 109 from China, 34 from Singapore and 10 from Malaysia⁶¹. Recent media reports and videos confirm that cases occurred whereby trafficking rings involving Vietnamese nationals have lured girls into the sex trade or have trafficked them for mail-order brides. It is not clear, however, if young people under 18 years of age were also involved⁶².

Indian girls trafficked to Singapore and Malaysia

Ricky Ho, a Chinese national living in Singapore, lured five Indian females (four women and one girl aged 17 years) to the city-state with the promise of jobs. On reaching their destination, they were employed as domestic helpers in Singaporean homes. However, six months later, they were transported to Malaysia and sold to a local club in the capital. The victims said that Ho lured girls from the state of Manipur in India, first to Singapore and then to Malaysia, where they were exploited. They reported that there might be more than

100 girls from Manipur in Singapore and Malaysia who were recruited by him⁶³. In connection with this case, Manipur authorities arrested Philip Gangmei, a local racketeer from Manipur, on 23 September 2008. Three other arrests were made on 3 October 2008, also in Manipur⁶⁴.

International trafficking routes: The paucity of information on human and child trafficking to and through Singapore does not allow the tracing of the international routes of the child sex trade in Singapore. However, some general geographical patterns have been identified:

- Victims from Yunnan Province in China are trafficked through Myanmar into Thailand. Some of these girls are then trafficked through Thailand into Malaysia and Singapore⁶⁵.
- According to Dr Pattana Kitiarsa, a Thai anthropologist teaching at the National University of Singapore, the journey for Thai women and girls to Singapore tends to begin in Isan, and is often prompted by a call from a close contact already in Singapore or an agent that speaks of jobs in the city-state's highly profitable entertainment or sex industry. Often the trip involves a stop in the Hat Yai district (in Songkla, the Thai border province to Malaysia), where the girls may initially work in a brothel or catch the bus that takes them, by the cheapest means possible, to Singapore⁶⁶.
- Trafficking routes from Indonesia may be via sea or air. For example, from west Java, east Java and north Sulawesi, girls may be trafficked into Singapore by air via Jakarta. Another route uses Lampung as a transit point for the trafficking of victims from Java to Batam (Riau Island), and then finally to Singapore by boat⁶⁷.
- Victims from Cambodia are trafficked to Malaysia through Thailand. They may then cross the Malay border to provide sex services to workers living in this area⁶⁸.

Traffickers and trafficking mechanisms: A common way to recruit young people into trafficking is through deception about job opportunities in Singapore. According to the 2008 report presented by the Embassy of the Philippines, the *modus operandi* is for illegal recruiters to promise young women and girls non-existent jobs as waitresses or guest relations officers in restaurants and hotels in Singapore. They are each charged a minimum of S\$100 to S\$1,000 as a recruitment fee and given roundtrip tickets (sometimes

the return ticket is fake), a fake invitation letter and “show money” to show to Philippine immigration officials who may scrutinise their financial capacity as tourists. The report found that the proliferation of budget airlines, which has significantly lowered the cost of travel from the Philippines to Singapore, has made it “easier and cheaper” for traffickers to do their business⁶⁹.

Sometimes women and girls are lured by recruiting agencies, which pay agents to find victims in their countries of origin (see the case of the Indian girls in the box above), and who usually obtain identification and travel documents and organise transport to Singapore. The involvement of family members in the recruitment phase is also widespread. According to Dr Pattana Kitiarsa, the agents who manage the trafficking of Thai women and girls to Singapore are normally close to the victims (i.e. relatives such as uncles and aunts). Veteran Thai workmen, based in Singapore, are also involved in this trafficking chain⁷⁰. Instances whereby children are sold by their families are rare, but still occur, as the case of the Sri Lankan children trafficked to Singapore clearly shows⁷¹.

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According to various sources, victims usually enter Singapore with social passes, tourist visas and fake documents. Once in the country, they are exploited in prostitution in various locations, including Geylang, the main red-light district in Singapore; Orchard Road, where there is a shopping centre known for being frequented by prostitutes; and even residential areas such as Toa Payoh, Joo Chiat and Tanjong Katong⁷². Cases of Thai girls providing sex services in ‘forest brothels’ located not far outside of central Singapore, across from one of the city-state’s foreign worker dormitories, have also been reported⁷³.

As in many other countries, traffickers active in Singapore are not necessarily part of a highly organised transnational criminal organisation. Although this may be true in some cases, it is equally clear that many traffickers do not belong to criminal syndicates. Some traffickers operate independently, while others are viewed as respected members of their communities. Investigations and convictions for trafficking-related offences also show that in many instances traffickers come from the same ethnic and national background as the children and young people they recruit into sex trafficking.

The various forms of sexual exploitation into which children and young people are trafficked: Available sources suggest that children and young people are trafficked to and through Singapore mainly for exploitation in prostitution. No cases of trafficking for the production of sexual abuse materials have been reported. Child trafficking for sexual purposes appears to be fuelled not only by local demand, but also by a request for sex services from foreign, male workers, tourists and travellers⁷⁴.

Media and NGO reports reveal that some women and girls who are recruited for domestic work are subjected to various violations, including sexual assault by someone in their employer’s house. This is the case for girls from Indonesia, the Philippines and, potentially, Cambodia, among others⁷⁵. To tackle this illegal practice, in 1998 the Government of Singapore reformed the criminal code, increasing the penalties for physical assault, sexual abuse and forced confinement when the perpetrator is an employer and the victim a foreign domestic worker by 50%. As a result of this new legal provision, 26 employers or household members were convicted and sentenced between 2001 and 2004. Despite this progress, many cases reportedly never make it to trial, in part due to bias and inappropriate treatment by police⁷⁶.

Cases of Vietnamese nationals who have lured girls for use as mail-order brides should be further investigated in order to verify whether trafficking for child marriage is also a reality in Singapore.

Indonesian child domestic worker abused by Singaporean employer (2003)

Since dropping out of school, Dewi (not her real name) and her family have been trying to find a good job for her to earn money to help the family. She was 16 years old when an agent came to the village looking for women who were interested in going to Singapore to work as housemaids. The salaries were higher than anything Dewi, a young woman with only a junior high school education, could ever hope to earn in Indonesia. She and her family jumped at the offer. The agent told her not to bring her identity card, because a new one would be made for her. In Batam, she stayed at the migrant worker holding centre for several weeks as her papers were being processed. Before leaving for Singapore, the manager of the centre gave Dewi her new identity card.

The date of birth had been changed to make her 18 years old; old enough to enter Singapore on a work visa. Once in Singapore, her problems began. Her employer was very difficult to please. He began to sexually harass her and asked for 'special favours'. When Dewi refused he sent her back to the employment agency claiming she was a lazy worker. The agent got very angry and threatened to send her to Batam as a sex worker. She asked to be sent home. He agreed, but only if she repaid all of his expenses, which amounted to over IDR10 million (US\$1000). Instead, he sent her to another agency in Batam, and they too insisted that she repay their expenses before she could go home. As she had no money, they planned to send her to Malaysia to work as a domestic helper. Dewi was afraid and anxious to return home. She wrote her father about her predicament and he contacted a legal aid organisation. This organisation contacted Solidaritas Perempuan, who together with a Batam-based NGO, Karya Migran, and the local police, started working on Dewi's case. The police found a passport in which her date of birth had been changed to make her 25 years old, the age required for a work visa in Malaysia. Dewi is now back home with her family. She left behind many other underage girls waiting to be sent to Malaysia as migrant workers.

Source: 2003 interview with Solidaritas Perempuan⁷⁷.

2.2. Child pornography and online sexual exploitation of children

Despite the lack of official statistics about child pornography and online sexual exploitation of children, it is evident that this form of CSEC is affecting and creating concern in Singapore. All forms of pornography are punished under the *Undesirable Publications Act* and the *Film Censorship Act*. However, statistics about investigations and convictions for crimes related to child pornography are not available due to the absence of a specific legal provision concerning this offence.

While no evidence of the production of child abuse images was found through this desktop review, possession, distribution and downloading of these types of unlawful materials are attested to by various media reports.

Downloading child pornography

July 2009 - Five computers in Singapore were used to download obscene videos and images from a child pornography network involving approximately 9000 people in more than 90 countries. According to the German police who initiated the investigation, the network had distributed the obscene material to several European countries, as well as the US, Canada and New Zealand. In Singapore, the footage containing "images of the most serious sexual abuse" were circulated through peer-to-peer technologies. In case of a conviction, each obscene video clip could result in an individual being jailed for up to six months, fined Singapore S\$500, or both - with a maximum of S\$20,000 in fines⁷⁸.

Possessing and exporting child pornography

February 2008 - A Singapore Airlines pilot was fined A\$12,000 for trying to bring child pornography into Australia. According to a newspaper website, on arrival to Adelaide, customs officials searched the pilot's laptop and found seven video clips, some of which contained footage of rape, sexual violence and children engaged in sexual activity. The offender pleaded guilty to charges of importing banned material and making a false statement to a customs officer. The maximum sentence possible in Australia for offences involving child pornography is a fine of A\$275,000 and 10 years imprisonment⁷⁹.

In 1996 a licensing scheme took effect in Singapore requiring ISPs to block access to certain websites. The aim was "to target 'content that inflames political, religious or racial sensitivities' as well as pornography and gambling"⁸⁰. According to information provided by the Media Development Authority (MDA), which keeps the list of banned URLs, access to child pornography websites is also a problem in Singapore.

The increasing use of new ICTs by Singaporean children and young people is exposing them to various risks, including sexual abuse and exploitation. Data provided by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore shows that in 2008 the country had one of the world's highest rates of home computer ownership (about 73% of households owned at least one computer), as well as Internet penetration (76% of households had access to the Internet). With regard to the use of new technologies by children, the same report found that 99% of residents aged between seven and 18 years had access to a computer and the Internet at any location⁸¹.

The widespread utilisation of the Internet by children and youth was confirmed by a 2009 study on children's online behaviour and parental awareness of online risks. Commissioned by Symantec, the *Norton's Online Living Report Singapore* polled 432 respondents; 397 adults aged 20 or older (including 93 parents) and 35 children aged 15 to 19. The report revealed that Singapore teenagers spend an average of 18 hours online each week. This is eight hours more than the global average reported in a similar survey and four hours more than parents think. Children are able to connect to the Internet readily at home or at school, but they are increasingly looking for an alternative environment away from parental control. The survey reported that 38% of teenagers go online at a friend's place and 23% go online at an internet café.

Among teenagers, 48% chatted with strangers online more than once a week and 43% gave out personal information online. One out of five teenagers accessed illegal or unlicensed materials (including pornography). While parents believed that the majority of online activity was confined to entertainment and gaming sites, responses by teenagers indicated otherwise. In reality, 93% spent time video streaming, 88% spent time on social networking sites and 55% spent time blogging⁸².

Harms posed to children by ICTs were also examined in a study published in 2001. This study profiled parents and children regarding their awareness of Internet problems and dangers, and looked at how they perceived the effectiveness of various safety strategies. A total of 552 children from two primary schools, two secondary schools and two junior colleges in Singapore, as well as 621 parents participated in the study. Findings of the survey demonstrated that parents who speak English at home, compared to parents who speak other languages, were more aware of and concerned about the risks connected with the use of the Internet, namely exposure to pornography, contact with sexual predators, Internet addiction, misinformation and violent games. Results also showed that, for boys, awareness of problems connected to pornography increased with age (for girls, awareness tended to peak between 13 and 15, and then began to decrease). Teenagers between the ages of 13 and 15 were the least concerned about Internet risks. With regard to safety measures, the survey found that both parents and children preferred educational, rather than control, strategies⁸³.

Despite the latter survey being conducted eight years before the Norton's Online Living Report, both prove that Singaporean children and young people are vulnerable to a number of risks. Apart from being voluntarily and involuntarily exposed to pornography (a research study published in 2001 found that one in two teenagers were tricked into accessing pornographic sites)⁸⁴, some are solicited while using chat rooms and social networking websites for online and offline sexual abuse, and for the production and dissemination of child pornography. A rise in the number of cases of teenagers being raped by people they have met in chat rooms as a result of sexual grooming has been reported since 2001⁸⁵. The practice is confirmed by a follow-up survey of approximately 20 adults who molested children. According to this small study, six in 10 abusers 'groomed' their child victim before abusing him/her; some spent hours chatting with victims online before making any physical contact⁸⁶.

Incidents of self-generated sexual images or films being posted online by teenagers themselves or ex-boyfriends have also been reported, showing that more needs to be done to prevent this harmful behaviour⁸⁷. Sometimes, the self-victimisation of children through the use of new ICTs is associated with peer-to-peer exploitation, bullying and youth as offenders. For example, in a 2007 case a girl was slapped, stripped and filmed by her schoolmates⁸⁸.

Singapore woman's ex-lover puts her sex pictures online

A Singapore woman in her 20s let her ex-boyfriend post explicit sexual pictures of her on a blog. The pictures were supposed to be private, but ended up on forums and websites all over the world.

The girl alleged that her ex-boyfriend later charged a fee to access the blog and view the pictures. She also claimed that she had taken down the blog immediately once she found out it had been made available to the public. But it was too late as some of these explicit pictures had already been copied and re-posted on several websites and forums. A few of the pictures showed her posing semi-nude in several public locations, while others showed her having sex with a partner. The girl also added that some photos were taken several years before, perhaps when she was still underage. A video, which was posted on an amateur porn website together with a hand-phone number and an instant messaging address,

urging viewers to call or send private messages, was viewed more than 30,000 times by users from all around the world⁸⁹.

Despite the cited studies and growing number of reports in the media, efforts to create awareness among people on the potential risks and harms that they can encounter in the virtual world or to promote preventive measures have been limited.

2.3. Child prostitution

The phenomenon of child prostitution in Singapore appears to be closely connected to other forms of sexual exploitation, especially trafficking and child pornography. According to the US Department of State's human rights report, some child prostitution occurred in the city-island in 2007. Forty young females involved in prostitution, and believed to be under 18, were arrested by authorities that year⁹⁰. It is not clear, however, whether or not these prostituted children were trafficked. Figures on children and young people engaged in prostitution are not available. David Brazil, in his book, *No Money, No Honey!*, estimated that 6000 people were involved in commercial sex in Singapore, but no figure referring specifically to minors was provided⁹¹.

Prostitution is legal in Singapore (as long as it takes place among adults), but various prostitution-related activities, such as pimping and public solicitation, are not. Since employment of children under 18 in the legal, licensed brothels operating throughout the country is forbidden, child prostitution primarily takes place in off-street locations, such as hotels, karaoke bars, apartments, massage parlours, etc.

Most of the media reports referring to child prostitution mention cases of young people coming from outside of Singapore. This may imply that the majority of minors involved in this form of sexual exploitation are also victims of cross border trafficking.

While information about the involvement in prostitution of particularly vulnerable groups of Singaporean children (such as children from dysfunctional families, addicted to substances, sexually abused, etc.) is not available, anecdotal evidence suggests that an increasing number of Singaporean teenagers are exchanging sexual services for access to modern goods or for extra pocket money, using the Internet or mobile phones to advertise or sell sex services. This form

of prostitution, known by its Japanese name as 'enjo kosai' (or 'compensated dating'), is usually occasional and appears to affect both girls and boys.

Teen boy engaging in commercial sex through contacts made on the Internet

A teenage Singaporean boy, aged 15, decided to get money from strangers by offering 'paid fun'. According to court documents, the boy had been chatting with strangers on social networking websites since he was in Primary 3. After coming across a website popular with homosexuals, he started posting messages and chatting there. In December 2006, needing money to 'maintain his lifestyle', the boy posted messages on the website saying that he was 'seeking paid fun'. On the website, he said he was 16, but he revealed his real age to anyone he met personally or chatted with on the telephone.

A month or two after the boy posted the messages, a 37-year-old man responded and agreed to pay him S\$50 in exchange for sexual favours. The boy told him his address and they met at the boy's home on the same day. After this encounter, the boy also had sex in exchange for money with two more men who got to know the boy online through the same website. In July 2009, all three men pleaded guilty in the Subordinate Courts to one charge each of performing obscene acts with the teen⁹².

A number of court cases reported by the media confirm how prevalent this practice has become. In one incident, a 14-year-old girl who needed money to pay her bills had sex with at least five men. In another, a 15-year-old girl used chat rooms to settle her boyfriend's debts by having paid sex with three men. Two court cases mentioned in a media article published in 2005 further underline the trend. Two girls, one 13 and the other 14, were paid S\$30 (US\$18) each for sex. Furthermore, five girls at the Pertapis Centre for Women and Girls admitted to having sex for money; the youngest was only 14-years-old⁹³. In a 2008 case, a Singaporean girl posted on her blog that she would have sex with men to help pay for the cost of her school, showing that girls are going beyond chat rooms to reach out to more people on the Internet⁹⁴.

Advertisements of girls offering sex services in exchange for money can easily be found on the Internet. In one ad

accessed in 2008, for example, two girls (both 17 years of age) agreed to have sex with one man at the same time for S\$1,600 for a two hour session. In others, the average price for an hour or 90 minute session was S\$250⁹⁵.

Singaporean online exploiter paying for sex with teens

“A.T.” began his online exploits in 1999. By the time he was arrested in 2002, he had claimed several victims, the youngest of whom was just 13 years old. Convicted of several charges, including rape, statutory rape and unnatural sex, the former assistant engineer was sentenced to 23 years’ imprisonment and given 36 strokes of the cane.

“A.T.” was a frequent visitor to IRC (Internet Relay Chat) rooms, which he used to make friends online and go on social outings. His forays into chat rooms began when an army mate told him it was easy to hook up with girls online. Intrigued, he went to an online chat room for teens and offered S\$200 as payment for sexual services.

“Angie” was a 14-year-old Secondary 3 student. After a few chat sessions, they exchanged phone numbers and decided to meet at a shopping mall. During the sexual encounter, he found out that “Angie” was a virgin. Later, he took her home in a taxi and paid her more than double the S\$200 they had agreed on. After this first experience, the offender had sex with another 50 girls he met online. He also filmed the girls in bed and used the tapes to blackmail them in order to avoid paying for the sex services⁹⁶.

Despite the lack of figures on the trend, it appears that calls to the Singapore Planned Parenthood Association’s hotline from girls asking if it was all right to have sex for money had quadrupled in 2004-2005. This shows that the phenomenon may have increased in the last few years, in conjunction with the rise in ICTs usage by children and young people.

According to counsellors and social workers, some teenagers feel compelled to sell sex services in order to buy products such as mobile phones, the latest fashions or recreational gadgets. In addition to widespread consumerism that targets children as both primary consumers and objects of consumption, the phenomenon of enjo kosai in Singapore has been attributed to a lack of attention on the part of parents, as well as to a ‘glamorisation’ of sex and pervasive

sexualisation of children in the media⁹⁷. Furthermore, products marketed to children can induce girls to see themselves as sexual objects and may lead to adults treating children as sexual beings ready for exploitation.

2.4. Child sex tourism

Tourism in foreign destinations is very common among Singaporean citizens. Data provided by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority of Singapore (ICA) shows an increasing trend in the number of departures for outbound tourism.

Number of international departures by local citizens in 2008	Increase/decrease since 2007
6,828,362	+ 13.3%

Source: ICA⁹⁸

Top 10 international destinations for departing citizens in 2006 (Asia Pacific destinations only) ⁹⁹		
Rank	Country	Number of arrivals
1	Malaysia	9,634,506
2	Indonesia	1,359,755
3	China	755,883
4	Thailand	650,559
5	Hong Kong	573,330
6	Australia	265,200
7	Taiwan	166,179
8	USA	115,939
9	Japan	94,161
10	Macau	82,298

Despite the lack of precise information, it appears that some Singaporean citizens engage in sexual acts with children during their trips abroad. According to a review on child sex tourism, Singapore has been identified as a sending country in the ASEAN region. However, no empirical data currently exists to confirm that Singapore is a significant contributor to child sex tourism as only few cases of Singaporeans charged overseas for sexual offences against young persons have been reported. Recent information provided by the Singapore Police Force confirms this, showing that there were no arrests in the years 2007/2008 for child sex tourism offences occurring in Singapore or committed by Singaporean citizens abroad¹⁰¹.

A number of studies, documentaries and media articles have indicated the Indonesian Riau Archipelago, especially Batam, as one of the main locations for Singaporean child sex tourists. According to an NGO survey, almost half of all clients of prostitution in the Riau Islands are from Singapore. In many cases they are working-class men in search of sex that are attracted by the lower prices of sex services, as compared to Singapore. Prostitution takes place in semi-legal brothel complexes (lokalisasi), modelled on centres established by the Dutch colonial government, as well as on the streets and in unofficial brothels, bars and karaoke lounges. While Western expatriates prefer the bar scene, Singaporeans and Malaysians appear to prefer the karaoke lounges. A party drug and dance scene that caters to a younger lower-middle-class group of Singaporeans has also emerged alongside these venues¹⁰².

Booms and busts in sex tourism of Singaporean men to the Riau Islands

(Excerpts from: Inside Indonesia, a non-profit online magazine, managed by the Indonesian Resources and Information Programme (IRIP))

“The sex tourists who frequent the karaoke bars and discos [of Riau Islands] make a major contribution to the local economy of the islands, providing jobs not just for sex workers, but for motorcycle taxi-drivers, hotel staff, hawkers and workers in countless other service industry occupations. Incomes in these associated industries are cyclical, reflecting the influx of tourists during peak periods like weekends and public holidays, and the reduction in sex tourist numbers during quiet times like Ramadan and Chinese New Year. They also follow the booms and busts of the industry as a whole. [...]

The sex tourism boom ended when the Singapore economy experienced a downturn in 2002. There were significant job losses in many industries, leaving potential sex tourists with a lot less disposable income. The SARS epidemic of 2003 also had a significant impact on their ability to travel. The local Singapore sex industry has also witnessed a transformation, with large numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese nationals working as illegal sex workers on short-term tourist passes. The diversification of the Singapore industry has led to a shift in local price structures and reduced the ‘push factors’ that led men to cross the border into Indonesia.

The sex industry in the islands then experienced an even more dramatic downturn in the second half of 2005 after Sutanto, the new Indonesian national Head of Police, issued an edict that gambling was no longer to be tolerated. The sex industry, which had been closely tied to gambling, was badly affected. With the exception of floating casinos (charter boats that organise gambling on board), much of the gambling industry has been shut down. The Singapore government’s plan to open a number of local casinos further threatens the symbiotic link between gambling and sex across the border.

The importance of gambling to the sex industry demonstrates the complex set of factors that drive cross-border sex tourism. While good exchange rates and the low comparative cost of sex fuel demand, the attraction of the islands is more than economic. By crossing the border, Singaporean working class men acquire much purchasing power, which allows them to fulfil their fantasy of being a towkay (boss).

In Singapore, they might be a taxi-driver or a day-labourer, struggling to make ends meet. But in the islands, they can afford to drink expensive liquor and eat as much seafood as they like.”¹⁰³

A study by the Johns Hopkins University, published in 2007, found that Singaporeans are among the most frequent child sex tourism perpetrators in Thailand. While Western European men make up the highest number of sex tourists in Bangkok and Chonburi, Malaysians and Singaporeans seem to make up the highest percentage of foreign tourists seeking prostitution in southern Thailand.¹⁰⁴ The same research also revealed that, according to World Vision Cambodia, sex offenders travelling to Cambodia for child sex tourism originate from various countries, including Singapore¹⁰⁵.

Some media articles have mentioned incidents of travellers, foreign workers (eg, Thais, Indians) and expatriates buying sex services, including from minors, during their stay in Singapore¹⁰⁶. While cases involving expatriates who have become long-time residents in the countries where they perpetrate their child sex offences should not be labelled as child sex tourism (the UNWTO defines “tourism” as a stay of less than 12 months), the possibility that Singapore is also a destination for child sex tourism should be further investigated.

2.5 Profiling child victims and child sexual offenders: main characteristics from the desktop review

2.5.1. Who are child sexual offenders?

Presently, there is a lack of knowledge about those who sexually exploit children in Singapore and the factors pushing them to purchase sex services from minors. What is evident, however, is that demand comes from both local and foreign exploiters. In a number of cases of child trafficking for sexual purposes and child prostitution, the offenders appear to belong to the same ethnic group as the victims. For example, the trafficking of girls from China is frequently fuelled by the request of sex services from Chinese Singaporeans. Similarly, the presence of foreign workers from Thailand, India, Bangladesh and other countries partly justifies the trafficking of girls from these places of origin to Singapore.

In a 2004 publication entitled *Invisible Trade*, the author reveals the case of a Japanese client purchasing sex in Singapore from a Mongolian woman contacted through an escort agency. Additionally, instances of travellers and expatriates purchasing sex services in the main “prostitution areas” of the city-state, such as Orchard Road, are mentioned¹⁰⁷. Despite the book focusing mainly on women, the possibility that the perpetrators who sexually exploit children in Singapore include travellers or tourists should be further investigated and analysed.

2.5.2. Who are child victims of sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations?

Based on existing knowledge, it is not possible to profile the children involved in child trafficking for sexual purposes and other forms of sexual exploitation. Some general and broad demographic characteristics can, however, be provided. Media articles and other sources referring to the child sex trade in Singapore seem to confirm the global trend, that this manifestation of CSEC affects mainly girls aged 16-17 years. No cases involving boys being trafficked for sexual purposes have been identified through the desktop review. The victimisation of both boys and girls is present online (solicitation for sexual abuse online or offline, children made the subjects of child abuse images, etc), as well as

in the form of child prostitution, specifically, “*enjo kosai*”. The age of the victims involved in these cases can also be lower compared to child trafficking for sexual purposes, with children aged 13-17 years providing sex services in exchange for money or other goods.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO ADDRESS CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING AND OTHER FORMS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

3.1 Prevention

Several preventive activities relating to CSEC have been undertaken by the Singapore Government in collaboration with other stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs and UN agencies. While actions to promote safe use of the Internet have been numerous, though uncoordinated, responses to prevent trafficking for sexual purposes have been very limited and, for the most part, not child-focused. Continuous efforts for more effective preventive measures are necessary, including efforts to reduce demand for sex services from children in Singapore and abroad.

3.1.1 Child pornography and online sexual exploitation of children

Singapore has regulated Internet content since 1996 through the *Media Development Authority (MDA) of Singapore Act*. Under the Act, the MDA has the authority to require the blocking of specific external sites or domains, and to mandate the removal or moderation of “objectionable” content hosted by service or content providers. The MDA’s *Internet Code of Practice* defines prohibited content, which ISPs must block, including pornography and materials depicting paedophilia or sexual activity by a person who is, or who appears to be, less than 16-years-old¹⁰⁸. In addition to the filtering that occurs under the mandates of the MDA, the Ministry of

Education (MOE) has adopted a system to block access to pornographic and similarly objectionable Internet sites on its proxy servers¹⁰⁹.

The MDA has also encouraged the three main ISPs¹¹⁰ to develop and offer family access networks (FAN) that filter out pornographic and other objectionable websites for an additional fee (about S\$2 per month). Additionally, as part of the software package, FAN subscribers can report child abuse images via an online form. Complaints are maintained by the software vendor who investigates and updates the filter database¹¹¹. Despite FAN being a valid option for preventing access to child abuse and other illegal materials, it suffers from a low take-up rate. In 2006, the National Internet Advisory Council (NIAC) noted the low adoption rate and recommended that the industry actively promote and develop the FAN service¹¹².

In March 2006, the *Voluntary Content Code for Self-Regulation of Mobile Content (Mobile Content Code)* was developed through a joint effort of the NIAC¹¹³ and the three local telecommunication companies – MobileOne, SingTel Mobile and StarHub Mobile. It seeks to protect the young from the undesirable content that can be accessed through mobile devices. To ensure its effective implementation, mechanisms to enforce the *Mobile Content Code* have been put in place¹¹⁴. Also in 2006, the Internet Industry Association of Singapore (IIAS) launched an online child safety portal for Singaporeans to educate children, parents, teachers and carers on the potential threats that children face on the Internet¹¹⁵.

A financial coalition to counteract child pornography

In January 2007, the Association of Banks in Singapore (ABS) announced the creation of a financial coalition against child pornography, including its nine merchant acquiring and credit card issuing member banks. The coalition aims to support the global effort to identify commercial sources of child abuse images and cut off the flow of funds that support their dissemination. As part of this endeavour, the ABS manages a telephone hotline to facilitate the sharing of information from banks and members of the public through the reporting of suspected child pornography websites¹¹⁶.

In addition, MDA has implemented the MediAction! programme to raise awareness among Internet users, youth, educators, parents and the public, about the challenges and dangers of the Internet. In 2007 more than 300,000 people

participated in this programme¹¹⁷.

In its report on the impact of new media on Singaporean society, the Advisory Council on the Impact of New Media on Society (AIMS) stressed that, “while there have been commendable efforts by MDA, MOE and community groups, they have largely been ad hoc and uncoordinated.”¹¹⁸

3.1.2 Child trafficking for sexual exploitation

Actions to prevent trafficking for sexual purposes have been very limited and, for the most part, not child-focused. While government responses are limited due to its lack of acknowledgement of this form of child sexual exploitation, international organisations and NGOs have supported and/or implemented some interventions to increase awareness and reduce children’s vulnerability, especially in countries of origin.

Since 1998, UNIFEM Singapore has funded a number of projects in Southeast Asia (eg, Vietnam, Laos) aimed at diminishing the supply for human trafficking, mainly through the economic empowerment of women and girls who are particularly exposed to the sex trade¹¹⁹. As part of these efforts, in 2001, UNIFEM Singapore, in collaboration with Yayasan Mitra Kesehatan dan Kemanusiaan (in Batam), implemented the ‘Stop Trafficking of Women & Children for Sex’ programme, which was intended to educate women on their reproductive health rights, raise awareness on the issue and create employment that would provide women and children alternatives to trafficking¹²⁰.

Emphasis has also been placed on education about human trafficking. In 2007, UNIFEM Singapore started the school talk programme to actively promote awareness on issues regarding women and children, including trafficking and maid/domestic violence. The first school talk was conducted at Cedar Girls Secondary School from 10 to 13 September 2007. This was followed by assembly talks for students at Hwa Chong Institution on 14 September and Republic Polytechnic on 12 December 2007. Approximately 400 students from Cedar Girls Secondary, 1000 from Hwa Chong Institution and 300 from Republic Polytechnic attended and were presented with statistics on the rising number of abuse and trafficking cases of women and children around the world. The students were also shown a video clip about trafficking and the abuse of women¹²¹. In collaboration with

various institutions, workshops and roundtable discussions on human trafficking were also recently organised by UNIFEM Singapore to raise the awareness of university students and the public at large¹²².

In 2007, MTV, in partnership with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), launched the regional MTV EXIT (End Exploitation and Trafficking) campaign, involving countries such as Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the Philippines. In the framework of this initiative, a documentary called “Traffic”, aimed at raising awareness and increasing prevention of human trafficking in the Asia-Pacific region, was produced and aired in 2007¹²³. As a follow-up, an animated film about human trafficking and sexual exploitation entitled “Intersection”, was broadcast in March 2009 on MTV channels in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia.

A number of interventions have been developed by the Government to enhance protection of foreign domestic workers from various violations, including sexual abuse and exploitation. An information campaign that aims to raise awareness among this target group about their rights and resources available has been implemented in an effort to prevent incidents of trafficking. Information on employees’ rights and police hotline numbers for domestic workers has been printed on prepaid phone cards. The Ministry of Manpower has a biannual newsletter, published in multiple languages, that it mails directly to all 180,000 foreign domestic workers. Additionally, all foreign domestic workers working in Singapore for the first time attend a compulsory course on domestic safety and their employment rights and responsibilities¹²⁵.

The NGO HOME promotes actions to combat trafficking and exploitation through the empowerment of migrant men and women with skills for employability and livelihood development. In 2006, the organisation was given a grant by Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential Program as part of Microsoft’s effort to combat human trafficking in the region. The grant was used to set up two centres to provide basic IT education for migrant workers. In 2008, HOME set up an English language and caregivers’ training facility for migrant workers. Workshops and seminars for migrant workers, providing information on employment issues/laws for workers in an easy to understand format were also organised¹²⁶.

'STOP' Sex Trafficking of Children & Young People Campaign



Conducted as a partnership between The Body Shop and ECPAT, this three-year global campaign, launched in 2009, seeks to provide immediate relief to child victims with funds raised and to create long-term changes by engaging the public in awareness-raising and lobbying decision makers to strengthen concerted action against child trafficking for sexual purposes.



In August 2009, with approximately 30 guests and representatives from the media in attendance, the 'Stop Sex Trafficking of Children & Young People Campaign' was launched in Singapore with an interactive Q&A session on child trafficking with the media. Campaign activities in Singapore also included a film screening and a visual campaign of posters in the subway and on a city metro bus. In Singapore, the campaign is being conducted in partnership with UNIFEM Singapore and the NGO HOME.

3.1.3 Child prostitution

While no measures focus specifically on preventing child prostitution, the Government has put forth some efforts to empower children to make informed decisions on sex-related issues.

Sex education in schools as a strategy to prevent child prostitution

Under the "Growing Years" programme, the Ministry of Education has made it mandatory for schools to implement sexuality education that includes information on the consequences of sex, as well as providing life-skills, such as communication, negotiation, decision making, problem solving and assertiveness. These form an essential part of the sexuality education curriculum. The programme has provided a platform for students to think about their values and attitudes towards sexuality issues, and to raise awareness on the options available and their consequences¹²⁷. As part of this activity on sexuality education, since 2001, the police have also been delivering talks to teachers and trainee teachers on legal issues relating to sexual crimes, as well as trends, particularly with regard to internet relay chat and telephone chat lines. Although not explicitly addressing child sexual exploitation, sexuality education has proved to be an effective strategy in preventing prostitution-related practices such as *enjo kosai*, which have become quite common among Singaporean children¹²⁸.

In 2007, the "Love Them. Talk about Sex" programme was launched to teach parents with children aged 10-17 how to talk to their children about sexuality issues. Face-to-face workshops were conducted for parents at workplaces and schools. Parents were also supported by a resource booklet, a website and a helpline. Information and practical tips on talking to children about sexuality issues were also disseminated via media channels, such as radio programmes and magazine ads¹²⁹.

MCYS has promoted actions to network and train trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education (NIE), teachers, court officials, healthcare professionals, child care operators, police and social workers from family service centres (FSCs), children's homes and social service agencies on child protection issues. Training includes information such as recognising the signs and indicators of child abuse (including child sexual abuse and exploitation), managing disclosures and fulfilling the respective roles and responsibilities of agencies in the management of child protection cases. Since 2007, basic training on child protection has also been conducted for all full-time school counsellors¹³⁰. MCYS has also produced training videos, in collaboration with its partners, on various aspects of child protection. Some of the training materials include the video "Giving Voice", which is a joint effort by MCYS and MOE to increase awareness among teachers on how to manage

disclosures of child sexual abuse by students. This video was disseminated to all schools¹³¹.

3.1.4 Child sex tourism

In collaboration with the ASEAN countries, in 2005 Singapore embarked on a regional campaign entitled 'Combating Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia', which was initiated and implemented by Child Wise (ECPAT in Australia). The campaign was designed to mobilise responsible travellers and local citizens to report suspected cases of child sex tourism to dedicated hotline numbers, deter potential child sex offenders and create a culture of intolerance toward the sexual exploitation of children¹³². A variety of campaign materials, including posters, stickers and tent-cards, were produced and disseminated throughout ASEAN countries. In Singapore, MCYS, together with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Singapore Tourism Board, have been working together closely to operationalise the country's commitment to this regional education campaign. In 2006, flyers against child sex tourism were distributed at the National Association of Travel Agents' Singapore Fair to educate the public about how to help act against child sex tourists¹³³. In order to facilitate the reporting of suspected child sex tourism cases, in 2008, Singapore agreed to the inclusion of a police hotline number (1800-255-0000) in all ASEAN regional education campaign materials distributed to the public¹³⁴.

In 2007, UNIFEM Singapore launched the "Stop Child Sex" campaign against all forms of child sexual exploitation, including child sex tourism. The campaign was conceived as a tool to raise awareness of the problem and mobilise a wide range of target groups, including the public, students, governments, organisations, media and businesses. In the framework of this initiative, a dedicated website was set up (<http://www.stopchildsex.org.sg/>). It contains information about the issues, a comprehensive list of actions to be promoted by each target group and a series of poster advertisements for the campaign. The ads are aimed at informing Singaporeans and permanent residents of the law introduced in October 2007 that penalises commercial sex with persons under 18, whether the crime is committed in Singapore or overseas. Produced in both English and Chinese, the posters were also placed at the Kranji Bus Stop from December 2007 to February 2008¹³⁵.

3.2 National plan of action

The adoption of a national plan of action demonstrates a

state's commitment to prioritise and allocate efforts and resources to guarantee the right of children to be protected from sexual exploitation and trafficking.

Although the Government of Singapore participated in the World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, held in Brazil in November 2008, and signed the *Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call to Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents*, the country has not yet developed a national plan of action to address the different manifestations of CSEC. Nor has it adopted a multi-dimensional strategy on child protection or a comprehensive child rights policy. On the other hand, the protection of children from various forms of violence is said to be a priority for Singapore and is reportedly embedded in the general legal framework, as well as contained in a number of specific provisions¹³⁶.

3.3. Coordination and cooperation

National level

A number of efforts have been made by the Singapore Government to establish inter-agency coordination and cooperation in managing trafficking and child abuse cases, including sexual exploitation, as well as in providing support services to victims. However, cooperative exchange of information about potential trafficking issues with NGOs and foreign diplomatic missions in Singapore remains limited and needs to be further strengthened¹³⁷. Mechanisms to facilitate coordination at the national level have been set up for enhanced cooperation among government ministries, the private sector, media and representatives of civil society, with a view to enabling and supporting concrete action to prevent online sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

MCYS chairs the Inter-Ministry Working Group on the Management of Child Abuse, which is comprised of professionals involved in child protection. The working group, set up in 1997, seeks to establish clear guidelines to protect children's interests and welfare. It is a platform for professionals from the Health Ministry, the police and the Education Ministry to discuss issues concerning child protection, and to put into place systems and procedures for the management of child protection cases. It also sets out the roles and responsibilities of partners in child protection and reviews them regularly. The Child Protection Service (CPS) within MCYS is the main coordinator of the system.

It has developed the *National Standards for the Protection of Children*, which establishes the standards and roles for all agencies concerned with the management of child protection¹³⁸.

There are also multi-stakeholder working groups, such as the National Family Violence Network and the National Family Violence Dialogue Group, made up of representatives from relevant government agencies, the voluntary sector and concerned individuals. These groups look at the management of family violence in Singapore, the protocols and the coordination of agencies involved in the management of cases and the implementation of nationwide campaigns and public education. Although focusing on family violence, programmes and services under the national family violence framework are also relevant to victims of trafficking¹³⁹.

The Government works closely with NGOs to ensure adequate support services for victims of trafficking. Agencies are also part of a larger network of NGOs that provide a platform for coordination with relevant agencies, as well as for sharing knowledge and expertise¹⁴⁰.

Coordinating mechanisms have been set up since the 1990s to ensure children's safety in using the Internet and other ICTs. The National Internet Advisory Committee (NIAC) was formed in 1996 to advise the Media Development Authority (MDA) on its Internet policies and regulations governing the Internet, new media and related services¹⁴¹. The NIAC, which is comprised of representatives from government agencies, universities, businesses and the media, has recently been absorbed into the Internet and Media Advisory Committee (INMAC). Created in 2007, this new structure provides advice on public education programmes and promotes media literacy. It is also responsible for fostering the responsible use of the Internet and new media, and facilitating greater industry co-regulation. INMAC is comprised of key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, including Microsoft, Nokia, People's Association, SPH, MediaCorp, StarHub and SingTel¹⁴².

In addition, in January 2009 the Government established the Inter-Ministry Cyber-wellness Steering Committee (ICSC), which is co-chaired by the Deputy Secretaries of the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) and the MOE. This taskforce coordinates the Government's efforts, as well as works with the people-

private sector organisations and INMAC, to implement a national strategy for the protection of minors and cyber-wellness public education in Singapore. MICA and MOE will contribute a total of S\$10 million over five years to support the work of ICSC¹⁴³.

International and regional levels

Various actions have been taken to improve police and judicial collaboration at the regional and international levels, with a view to counteracting and preventing human trafficking, child sex tourism and cybercrime, including child pornography. However, Singapore reportedly needs to enhance cooperation with foreign governments in order to institutionalise procedures for reporting, investigating and prosecuting child sex tourism committed overseas by Singaporean citizens and permanent residents¹⁴⁴.

Singapore has established good regional and bilateral cooperation on criminal matters. The country is a party to the *Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters among like-minded ASEAN Member Countries* (2004), which is relevant to trafficking in persons. It has also made reciprocal arrangements with Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam allowing for extradition between the city-state and these two countries. Bilateral agreements with Hong Kong¹⁴⁶ and Indonesia¹⁴⁷, for extradition in relation to international crimes, further strengthen the framework of legal cooperation at the regional level. As a member State of ASEAN, in 2007, Singapore also endorsed the 2007-2009 work-plan to implement the *ASEAN Declaration against Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children*¹⁴⁸. In 2008 the country signed the *ASEAN Guidelines for the Protection of the Rights of Trafficked Children in Southeast Asia*¹⁴⁹.

Informal cooperation between police in Singapore, the Criminal Investigation Division Anti-trafficking Unit in Indonesia and police in Malaysia has been fostered. This cooperation is reflected in some successes, including the uncovering of a child trafficking ring operating across Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The Government has also developed bilateral cooperation with foreign embassies in Singapore, such as the Thai and Philippine embassies, for providing assistance and organising safe repatriation of trafficking victims¹⁵¹.

Regional and international cooperation to combat cybercrime, including child pornography, has been established in the

framework of the ASEAN Chiefs of Police (ASEANAPOL). The *ASEANAPOL Joint Communiqué* was signed during the 27th ASEANAPOL Conference, held from 4 to 6 June 2007 and attended by representatives of police forces from the 10 ASEAN countries, and by delegates from observer countries such as Australia, China, Japan, Korea and New Zealand. The document detailed resolutions to cooperate in tackling regional security issues such as terrorism, cybercrime, commercial crimes and transnational fraud, as well as to strengthen capacity building efforts among the member countries¹⁵².

The Singapore Police Force (SPF), as Chair of the 27th ASEANAPOL Conference, also co-hosted the inaugural Global Conference on Asian Organised Crime, from 22 to 24 January 2008, as a show of its commitment to combating organised crime and enhancing cooperation between ASEANAPOL and INTERPOL. The theme of the conference was “Combating Threats, Anticipating Challenges”. More than 200 specialists from 32 countries attended the conference to discuss issues such as casino operations, money laundering and drug and human trafficking¹⁵³.

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The campaign, ‘Combating Child Sex Tourism in Southeast Asia’ (see paragraph 3.1.4), has contributed to strengthened regional collaboration between ASEAN tourism destination and source countries (destination countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam; source countries: Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore) in combating child sex tourism. The campaign has also been hailed as an example of a good practice by the US Government and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation¹⁵⁴. As a follow-up to this initiative, a multi-year programme, called ‘The Southeast Asian Plan – A Sustainable Regional Response to Preventing the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism Destinations (2009 – 2013)’, has been developed. Drawing together a wide range of key stakeholders at the regional, national and local levels, from governments, international organisations, NGOs, the private sector and vulnerable communities, including children and youth, this five year plan will offer a more holistic and comprehensive approach to combating child sex tourism, while strengthening vital protection for children vulnerable to sexual exploitation in tourism destinations throughout the region¹⁵⁵.

3.4 Support services for child victims of

trafficking for sexual purposes and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation

Support services are ensured for all victims of child abuse, including child sexual abuse. According to definitions provided by the main child protection agency in Singapore, MCYS, child sexual abuse is “the sexual exploitation of a child for sexual gratification or any sexual activity between an adult and a child. It also includes exposing a child to forms of sexual acts or pornographic materials”¹⁵⁶.

Reports of alleged child abuse cases are made to the Child Protection Service, which immediately opens an investigation to ascertain the safety of the child and, where necessary, to intervene to safeguard and protect the child. Following this preliminary assessment, recovery and rehabilitation services are provided by multi-disciplinary teams. The Child Abuse Protection Team (CAPT) was established in 1996 by the Ministry for Community, Development and Sports (now MCYS) and is comprised of child protection officers, paediatricians, psychologists and other professionals where appropriate¹⁵⁷. The CAPT conducts multi-disciplinary case conferences on a weekly basis to deliberate on alleged new child abuse cases referred to MCYS. During the conference, professionals share their opinions on the cases, assess the degree of risk and decide on the care and protection plan, which includes arranging appropriate housing in government facilities or non-governmental crisis shelters, and providing counselling services¹⁵⁸. After court proceedings are concluded, the Subordinate Courts’ counselling body has a programme to continue providing psychological and therapeutic support for victims¹⁵⁹.

Standards and roles for all relevant agencies are contained in the *National Standards for the Protection of Children*,¹⁶⁰ while procedures are documented in the manual for the Management of Child Abuse in Singapore. First launched in 1999, the manual outlines the different responsibilities of various parties – MCYS, the police, the ministries of education, health and manpower, the Attorney-General’s Chambers, the Juvenile Court and other non-governmental organisations – to ensure that services are put into action in every instance where a child requires protection¹⁶¹. The manual was revised and updated in 2003 and 2008¹⁶² to ensure its continued usability and relevance.

A protocol exists to manage the cases of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. This protocol is stipulated

in the *Integrated Management of Family Violence Cases Manual*, which is shared by all key agencies. The manual details the work process for key agencies such as the police, Family Court, the prisons, MCYS, hospitals, social service agencies and crisis shelters. It provides an overview of the family violence system, covering legislation, the networking system and principles for handling cases. It also provides detailed step-by-step procedures for key agencies, including identification of cases, referral, crisis intervention and discharge¹⁶³. Services provided under the ambit of the National Family Violence Networking System include a hotline, counselling, translation services (including during the interview process) and accommodation in shelters¹⁶⁴. Assistance to victims may vary according to the assessment made by the intervention team. The relevant embassies are notified as soon as it is ascertained that foreign nationals in the sex industry are victims of vice syndicates¹⁶⁵.

3.5 Child and youth participation

It has been reported that Singapore has a long tradition of child and youth participation. Indeed, MCYS has developed various platforms to seek youth feedback and consultation. In August 2004, over 2000 youth from diverse backgrounds provided feedback for the 'Youth: Creating Our Future' public consultation exercise. Ideas that were received through the feedback process subsequently formed the basis of new youth initiatives that were launched or supported by MCYS, including a specialised website for youth (<http://youth.sg>). The website provides online space for youth to share and exchange ideas and acts as a 'virtual' space to complement

and support youth-led projects and events.

Another important arena is the National Youth Forum (NYF - www.nyc.pa.gov.sg). Created in 2004, under the auspices of the National Youth Council, the NYF provides a formal platform for youth from a variety of backgrounds to study policy formulation and debate national issues. Since its inception, the forum has engaged youth in issues of national, community and youth interest; provided training and opportunities to exercise leadership; and implemented projects on issues pertaining to youth.

In 2008, the Junior REACH Ambassadors programme was launched by MCYS with the aim of raising the level of active citizenship from a young age. As part of this programme, in January 2009, an interactive webpage (<http://app.reach.gov.sg/reach/default.aspx>) was created to engage and reach out to junior ambassadors and the greater youth community.

3.6 Legal framework and law enforcement

3.6.1 International instruments

International instruments	
Human rights bodies related to child rights	Comments
Charter-based bodies	
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Human Rights Council	Review planned for the 11 th session (2011)
Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	No visit so far
Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children	No visit so far

Treaty-based bodies		
Committee on the Rights of the Child	Key conclusions in relation to implementation of the <i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ratify the <i>Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>; - create a mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights (based on the <i>Paris Principles</i>) that is easily accessible to children, deals with complaints from children in a child-sensitive manner and provides remedies for violations of their rights under the Convention. 	
Children's rights instruments	Date of ratification	Date of submitted reports
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> - 1989	Acceded in 1995	2009 - 2 nd and 3 rd periodic reports 2002 - initial report
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i> - 2000	Not yet ratified	
<i>ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour</i> - 1999 (No. 182)	Ratified 2001	
<i>UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime</i>	Ratified 2007	
<i>UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children – 2000 (supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime)</i>	Not yet ratified	

The following is a synopsis of the international legal instruments defining the crimes related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children that have been adopted or still need to be ratified by Singapore:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

First and foremost, it is imperative that efforts to eradicate CSEC are guided by the acknowledgment that combating CSEC is part of a more comprehensive fight to protect all of the human rights of children. The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* came into force in 1990 and outlines the basic human rights of children across the globe. These rights include: the right to survival, to adequate living standards, to education, to participation in family, cultural and social life, to protection and to be free from all forms of exploitation, among others. Singapore acceded to the CRC on 2 October 1995 and, in so doing, demonstrated its commitment to joining a global endeavour to protect children everywhere. Therefore, Singapore has an obligation to adhere to the four guiding principles of the CRC:

Non-discrimination (Article 2) – *All rights apply to children without exception. It is the State's obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights.*

The *Constitution of Singapore* specifically guarantees all Singapore citizens, including children, the right to equality and non-discrimination. The Equality Provision, Article 12, states that “all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law. Except as expressly authorised by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens of Singapore on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment”¹⁶⁷.

Best interests of the child (Article 3) – *All actions concerning*

the child shall take full account of his or her best interests. The State shall provide the child with adequate care when parents or others charged with that responsibility fail to do so.

With regard to Article 3, “Singapore has entered a declaration stating that a child’s rights, as defined in the CRC, shall be exercised with respect for the authority of parents, schools and other persons who are entrusted with the care of the child, and in the best interests of the child, and in accordance with the customs, values and religions of Singapore’s multi-racial and multi-religious society regarding the place of the child within and outside of the family”¹⁶⁸.

Right to life, survival and development (Article 6) – *Every child has the inherent right to life, and the State has an obligation to ensure the child’s survival and development.*

According to research done by the Research and Advocacy Standing Committee of the Singapore Children’s Society, residents of Singapore enjoy average standards of living when compared to other developed nations and high standards of public health¹⁶⁹. Children are provided a comprehensive health care system from the time they are conceived, until they complete their pre-university education¹⁷⁰. The prospects of survival for Singapore’s children and youth appear to be in good standing, however, as in every country, some children and youth fall between the cracks of the government public welfare scheme.

Respect for the views of the child (Article 12) – *The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child.*

Article 14.1(a) of the *Constitution of Singapore* states that every citizen of Singapore has the right to freedom of speech and expression¹⁷¹. Parliament may, by law, impose restrictions on this right if it considers them necessary or expedient, and in the interest of the security of Singapore. The right of the child to express his own views in all matters affecting him would include issues of custody, care, education, abortion and sexual sterilisation¹⁷². According to the Singapore Children’s Society, the Government encourages feedback on policies and issues from students through various activities and programmes organised by the Ministry of Education, as well as through the feedback unit¹⁷³.

Articles 34 and 35 of the CRC make State Parties responsible for protecting all children from sexual exploitation, including child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

Article 34 of the CRC states:

“States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;*
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;*
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.”*

Article 35 stipulates that *“States Parties shall take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.”*

United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The *Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Optional Protocol)* was adopted in May 2000 and entered into force in January 2002. It places special emphasis on the criminalisation of these serious violations of children’s rights and the importance of increasing public awareness and international cooperation in efforts to combat them. The *Optional Protocol* requires state parties to: treat these offences as criminal acts; ensure that they have jurisdiction over the offences; provide for the extradition of offenders; encourage international cooperation between states in pursuing offenders; and provide support to child survivors of commercial sexual exploitation, including throughout the legal process¹⁷⁵. To date, Singapore has not ratified the *Optional Protocol*.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children

The Trafficking Protocol is a supplement to the United Nations *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, which is the main international instrument in this area¹⁷⁶. The Trafficking Protocol provided the first international definition

of 'trafficking in persons'.

Article 3 states:

"For the purposes of this Protocol:

'Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

'Child' shall mean any person under eighteen years of age".

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The *Trafficking Protocol* obliges state parties to make these illegal acts punishable under national law and serves as a model for national legislation. It determines which kinds of conduct should be sanctioned, the appropriate severity of punishment and effective measures to be taken to combat and prevent trafficking. The Singaporean Government has not yet ratified the *Trafficking Protocol*.

International Labour Organization treaties: the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has two conventions that are particularly relevant to child sexual exploitation. The first is *ILO Convention No. 182 (Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour)*, which entered into force in November 2000, and defines the types of behaviours that children under 18 are not to be involved with. It defines the 'worst forms of child labour' to include "all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage".....child prostitution, child pornography, the use of children for illicit activities and the use of children for any work that "by its nature, or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety and morals of children¹⁷⁷". Singapore ratified the convention in 2001.

ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention), which entered into force in June 1976, expressly states that the minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work, which by its nature, or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young people, shall not be less than 18 years¹⁷⁸. Singapore ratified the convention in 2005.

Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action

In 1996, the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children took place in Stockholm, Sweden. The ECPAT network, in collaboration with UNICEF and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, organised this event and called on all states, all sectors of society and all national, regional and international organisations to take action against CSEC. The *Stockholm Declaration* calls on countries to develop national plans of action against CSEC and to implement the *Agenda for Action* in six areas: coordination, cooperation, prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration and child participation. In Stockholm, 122 countries adopted the *Declaration and Agenda for Action*, which represents strong governmental commitments that should be honoured, though they are not legally binding.

In December 2001, the Government of Japan hosted the Second World Congress against CSEC in Yokohama. At this Congress, 159 countries reaffirmed their commitment to fighting against CSEC with consideration of more effective measures for eradicating CSEC and with the responsibility to maintain regional commitments. In November 2008 the World Congress III against CSEC was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This meeting emphasised that the responsibility of eradicating CSEC is in the hands of all stakeholders, not just governments. While representatives of the Government of Singapore were in attendance at the World Congress III, they have not yet adopted the *Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action*.

3.6.2 Current national legislation

The three major pieces of legislation related to child sexual exploitation in Singapore are the *Children and Young Person's Act*, the *Women's Charter*, and the *Penal Code*. While each of these statutes offers protection against crimes associated with CSEC, they should be reviewed to ensure that provisions and definitions related to CSEC crimes are fully consistent with international child rights standards and in particular, with the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress*

and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Trafficking Protocol) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Optional Protocol).

Trafficking of children for sexual purposes

Singapore's anti-trafficking laws are not fully in line with the international standards and, therefore, they may fail to properly and effectively protect children from the spectrum of activities that make up the trafficking process. The *Trafficking Protocol* states that the process leading to exploitation of children is important. This indicates that, whether or not the ultimate exploitation of the child occurs, the process of trafficking is still a criminal offence. It is therefore necessary to review existing legislation to ensure that all the actions taking place in the process of child trafficking are punished, regardless of whether or not actual exploitation occurs, and that the penalties for such acts reflect the grave nature of this crime.

Children and Young Persons Act

Article 7 criminalises the sexual exploitation of a child or a young person by imposing a punishment of a fine, imprisonment for up to two years, or both, on anyone who commits, abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure for the commission of an "obscene or indecent act with any child or young person." Furthermore, if the individual sexually exploits a child or young person repeatedly, the punishment increases to a greater fine, imprisonment for up to four years, or both¹⁸⁰.

Article 12 outlines the trafficking in children provision, which makes it an offence for anyone to participate in transferring or in conferring the possession, custody or control of a child, for any valuable consideration¹⁸¹. Violators are subject to punishment by imprisonment for up to four years¹⁸². Similarly, the act of harbouring or of having possession, custody or control of any child who is being trafficked within or outside of the country is punishable by up to four years of imprisonment¹⁸³.

Article 13 states that any person who, by or under any false pretence, false representations or fraudulent or deceitful means made or used either within or outside of Singapore, brings or assists in bringing any child into Singapore shall be guilty of an offence, and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding S\$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not

exceeding four years, or both¹⁸⁴.

Women's Charter

Section 141(1) of the charter expressly prohibits "traffic in women and girls", determining that any person who buys, sells, procures, traffics in, or brings into or takes out of Singapore a woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution is to be punished by a fine and imprisonment for up to five years¹⁸⁵.

Section 142 prohibits the importation of women and girls, for the purpose of prostitution, by false pretence, false representation, or fraudulent or deceitful means and carries a punishment of a fine and imprisonment for up to five years¹⁸⁶.

Penal Code

Section 107 of the *Penal Code* describes the criminal act of abetment, which pertains to crimes associated with CSEC, as they are often committed by more than one criminal actor. Section 107 states "a person abets the doing of a thing who (a) instigates any person to do that thing; (b) engages with one or more other person or persons in any conspiracy for the doing of that thing, if an act or illegal omission takes place in pursuance of that conspiracy, and in order to the doing of that thing; or intentionally aids, by any act or illegal omission, the doing of that thing."¹⁸⁷

Section 108A determines that a person abets an offence within the meaning of the code if, in Singapore, he/she abets the commission of any act outside of Singapore that would constitute an offence if committed within Singapore¹⁸⁸. For example, if person A, in Singapore, instigates person B, a foreigner in another country, to commit murder in their country, A is guilty of abetting murder.

Additionally, Section 108B states that if a criminal offence occurs within Singapore, any acts of abetment outside of Singapore will constitute the offence of abetment¹⁸⁹.

Section 363 of the *Penal Code* states that whoever kidnaps any person from Singapore or from lawful guardianship, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term which may extend up to 10 years, and shall also be liable to a fine or to caning¹⁹⁰.

Section 364 addresses abduction, which is defined as an individual using compelling force or using deceitful means to induce any person to go from any place, and carries the

punishment of imprisonment for up to seven years, a fine, or caning, or any combination thereof¹⁹¹.

Furthermore, Section 365 states that whoever kidnaps or abducts any person with intent to cause that person to be secretly and wrongfully confined, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to a fine or to caning¹⁹².

Section 366, which discusses women, but not children specifically, determines that whoever kidnaps or abducts any woman with the intent that she may be compelled, or knowing it to be likely that she will be compelled, to marry any person against her will, or in order that she may be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse, or to a life of prostitution, or knowing it to be likely that she will be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse, or to a life of prostitution, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to a fine or to caning¹⁹³.

Section 367 concerns the kidnapping or abduction of a person who is subjected to grievous hurt, slavery, etc., and states that whoever kidnaps or abducts any person in order that such person may be subjected, or may be so disposed of as to be put in danger of being subjected, to grievous hurt or slavery, or to non-consensual penile penetration of the anus, or knowing it to be likely that such person will be so subjected or disposed of, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to a fine or to caning¹⁹⁴.

Singapore's *Penal Code* makes it a crime, in Section 370, to import, export, remove, buy, sell or dispose of any person as a slave, or to accept, receive or detain against his will any person as slave¹⁹⁵. These acts are punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to seven years and a fine. Furthermore, there is a greater penalty for "habitual dealing in slaves", which is imprisonment for up to 10 years and a fine¹⁹⁶.

Child prostitution

Singapore's legislation does not fully conform to international standards with regard to the prostitution of children. While all children (both boys and girls) under the age of 18 are protected from commercial sexual transactions (in exchange for remuneration or another form of consideration), only girls are protected from the selling, hiring or obtaining possession of a person for the purpose of prostitution.

Women's Charter

Section 140(1) of the *Women's Charter* makes it an offence to sell, buy or obtain possession of any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution, either inside or outside the country, and carries the punishment of a fine and imprisonment for up to five years⁹⁷. Section 140(1)(i) prohibits having unlawful carnal connections with any girl under 16 years of age; an offence punishable by a fine and up to five years of imprisonment¹⁹⁸.

Section 143 of the Charter makes it an offence for an owner to permit a girl under 16 years of age to use his or her premises for unlawful sexual intercourse; punishable by a fine of up to three years of imprisonment, or both¹⁹⁹. Furthermore, Section 145(1) makes it an offence to encourage the prostitution of a girl under 16 years of age; also punishable by a fine, imprisonment for up to three years, or both²⁰⁰.

Under the Charter it is prohibited for an individual to knowingly live on earnings from, or trading in, the prostitution of others²⁰¹. This crime carries the punishment of a fine and imprisonment for up to five years²⁰². A person is deemed to be knowingly committing this act if they exercise control, direction or influence over the movements of any person in prostitution in such a manner as to indicate aiding, abetting or compelling the prostitution²⁰³.

Section 148(1) of the Charter states that it is an offence to keep or manage a brothel, and doing so will lead to the punishment of a fine, imprisonment for up to three years, or both²⁰⁴.

Penal Code

Section 372 of the Code makes it illegal to sell a minor for the purposes of prostitution. It states that "whoever sells, lets to hire or otherwise disposes of any person under the age of 21 years with intent that such person shall at any age be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person will at any age be employed or used for any such purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to a fine"²⁰⁵.

The Code offers the following explanation for Section 372: "When a female under the age of 21 years is sold, let for

hire, or otherwise disposed of to a prostitute or to any person who keeps or manages a brothel, the person so disposing of such female shall, until the contrary is proved, be presumed to have disposed of her with the intent that she shall be used for the purpose of prostitution.”

Section 373 pertains to the buying of a minor for the purpose of prostitution, stating that “whoever buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of any person under the age of 21 years, with intent that such person shall at any age be employed or used for the purpose of prostitution or illicit intercourse with any person or for any unlawful and immoral purpose, or knowing it to be likely that such person will at any age be employed or used for any such purpose, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine”²⁰⁶.

The explanation for Section 373 is as follows: “Any prostitute, or any person keeping or managing a brothel, who buys, hires or otherwise obtains possession of a female under the age of 21 years shall, until the contrary is proved, be presumed to have obtained possession of such female with the intent that she shall be used for the purpose of prostitution”.

Child pornography

The Government of Singapore has not ratified the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* and has not enacted provisions defining and criminalising specifically child pornography/child abuse material. Singapore’s existing laws addressing obscene and objectionable publications and obscene films prohibit certain materials based on their “obscene” and “objectionable” nature. These terms are vague and thus not in line with international standards addressing the issue of child pornography/abuse materials. However, the above mentioned laws provide a comprehensive legal framework to combat real or virtual pornography/abuse materials involving children.

Children and Young Persons Act

Article 7 of the Act, outlines the offence of sexual exploitation of a child or young person²⁰⁷. The Act makes it an offence for “any person who, in public or private:

(a) commits or abets the commission of or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any person of

any obscene or indecent act with any child or young person; or
(b) procures or attempts to procure the commission of any obscene or indecent act by any child or young person”.

The offence carries the punishment of “a fine, not exceeding S\$5,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both and, in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to a fine not exceeding S\$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding four years or to both²⁰⁸”.

There is no specific legal provision in the legislation of Singapore concerning the illegality of child pornography. However, the *Undesirable Publications Act* and the *Film Censorship Act* are relied on to regulate most obscene or objectionable material.

Undesirable Publications Act and Films Censorship Act

The *Undesirable Publications Act* makes it illegal to publish obscene or objectionable material. Section 3 of the act states that a publication is obscene if its effect, or (where the publication compromises 2 or more distinct parts or items) the effect of any one of its parts or items, if taken as a whole, tends to deprave and corrupt persons who are likely, having regard to all relevant circumstances, to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it²⁰⁹.

According to Section 2 of the *Undesirable Publications Act*, “publication” means pictures, photographs but also written materials (books), audio materials as well as drawings, whether made by computer-graphics (virtual pornography) or otherwise which are fixed in visual, audio or electronic support.

Section 4.1(a) defines objectionable publications as those which describe, depict, express or otherwise deal with matters such as sex, horror, crime, cruelty, violence or the consumption of drugs or other intoxicating substances in such a manner that the availability of the publication is likely to be injurious to the public good²¹⁰. Section 4.2 lists certain factors which shall be considered when determining if a publication is objectionable. The exploitation of the nudity of persons or children, and sexual conduct linked to violence and coercion are included in the list²¹¹.

Section 11 of the *Undesirable Publications Act* indicates that any person who makes, reproduces, sells, supplies, offers to

supply, exhibits, distributes, imports, exports or has in their possession any obscene publication, knowing or having reasonable cause to believe the publication to be obscene, shall be guilty of an offence, and on conviction shall receive a fine not exceeding S\$10,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both²¹². The punishment for objectionable publications is a fine not exceeding S\$5,000, or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months, or both²¹³.

Section 29 of the *Films Censorship Act* provides that anyone who makes or reproduces, imports, distributes, has in their possession for the purposes of distributing, exhibits or has in their possession for the purposes of exhibiting any obscene film knowing, or having reasonable cause to believe, the film to be obscene shall be guilty of a criminal offence²¹⁴. The simple possession of obscene films is a criminal offence, but it carries a lesser punishment than the offences listed above²¹⁵. Section 31 of the Act prohibits the advertisement of such films.

Section 32 of the *Films Censorship Act* describes offences involving children and young persons. It states that any person who causes or procures any child or young person or, having custody, charge or care of a child or young person, allows that child or young person to commit or abet in the commission of any offence mentioned in Sections 29, 30 or 31, shall be guilty of an offence²¹⁶.

In September 2007, amendments to the Penal Code were introduced to create a new offence of “Sexual grooming of minors under 16”. The new offence is targeted at sexual predators who prowl Internet chat rooms in the hope of procuring minors for sexual activity. The relevant parts are:

“Sexual grooming of minor under 16

376E.— (1) Any person of or above the age of 21 years (A) shall be guilty of an offence if having met or communicated with another person (B) on 2 or more previous occasions –

- (a) A intentionally meets B or travels with the intention of meeting B; and
- (b) at the time of the acts referred to in paragraph (a) –
 - (i) A intends to do anything to or in respect of B, during or after the meeting, which if done will involve the commission by A of a relevant offence;
 - (ii) B is under 16 years of age; and

- (iii) A does not reasonably believe that B is of or above the age of 16 years.

(4) A person who is guilty of an offence under this section shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 3 years, or with fine, or with both.”

According to this provision, a person above 21 years of age commits this offence if, while harbouring the intention to commit a sexual offence with a minor, he intentionally meets or travels with the intention of meeting the minor²¹⁷. The accused must also have met or communicated with the minor on at least two prior occasions. This amendment is, however, weakened by making it a defence to the crime that the person reasonably believed that the child was 16 years of age or older (ie, children between 16 and 18 years of age are left unprotected from sexual grooming)²¹⁸.

Sexual exploitation of children in tourism

Singapore has recently enacted comprehensive extraterritorial legislation, as well as a number of other provisions to deter activities that facilitate child sex tourism.

Penal Code

Singapore’s extraterritorial legislation pertaining to CSEC is found in Section 376C of the Code, which criminalises commercial sex with a minor less than 18 years of age outside of Singapore. Section 376C states that any person, being a citizen or a permanent resident of Singapore, who does, outside of Singapore, any act that would, if done inside of Singapore, constitute an offence under Section 376B, is guilty of an offence, and is liable to the same punishment as outlined in Section 376B.

Commercial sex with a minor under the age of 18 in tourism is made a criminal offence under Section 376D of the *Penal Code*²¹⁹. That Section states that “any person who:

- (a) makes or organises any travel arrangements for or on behalf of any other person with the intention of facilitating the commission by that other person of an offence under section 376C, whether or not such an offence is actually committed by that other person;
- (b) transports any other person to a place outside of Singapore with the intention of facilitating the commission by that other person of an offence under Section 376C, whether or not such an offence is actually committed by that other person; or
- (c) prints, publishes or distributes any information that is intended to promote conduct that would constitute

an offence under section 376C, or to assist any other person to engage in such conduct, shall be guilty of an offence...” and “...shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 10 years, or with fine, or with both”.

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children – general provisions

Penal Code

Section 375 of the Penal Code is the rape provision, which states that (1) any man who penetrates the vagina of a woman with his penis either (a) without her consent or (b) with or without her consent, when she is under 14 years of age, shall be guilty of an offence²²⁰. The punishment for this offence is a term of imprisonment for up to 20 years, and a fine, or caning. The punishment increases when a man commits an offence under Subsection (1) with a woman less than 14 years of age, without her consent, to a minimum of eight years and a maximum of 20 years of imprisonment, as well as caning with not less than 12 strokes²²¹.

In Section 376A(1)(a) of the *Penal Code*, sexual penetration of a minor under 16 is made a crime; punishable by imprisonment for a term up to 10 years, or with a fine, or with both²²². Furthermore, Section 376(2) states that whoever commits the offence of sexual penetration of a minor under 14 years of age shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of up to 20 years, and a fine, or caning²²³.

Section 376B of the Code makes it a criminal offence to have commercial sex with a minor who is under 18 years of age. Section 376B(1) specifies that “any person who obtains for consideration the sexual services of a person who is under 18 years of age shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 7 years, or with fine, or with both”. Additionally, Section 376B(2) states that “any person who communicates with another person for the purpose of obtaining for consideration, the sexual services of a person who is under 18 years of age, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both”.

Section 377D²²⁴ outlines the “mistake as to age” provision, stating that:

(1) “Subject to subsections (2) and (3) and notwithstanding

anything in Section 79 (mistake of fact provision), a reasonable mistake as to the age of a person shall not be a defence to any charge of an offence under Sections 376A(2), 376B or 376C.

- (2) In the case of a person who at the time of the alleged offence was under 21 years of age, the presence of a reasonable mistaken belief that the minor, who is of the opposite sex, was of or above —
- (a) the age of 16 years, shall be a valid defence to a charge of an offence under Section 376A(2);
- or
- (b) the age of 18 years, shall be a valid defence to a charge of an offence under section 376B or 376C.
- (3) For the purposes of subsection (2), the defence under that subsection shall no longer be available if, at the time of the offence, the person charged with that offence has previously been charged in court for an offence under Sections 376A, 376B, 376C or 376E, or Section 7 of the *Children and Young Persons Act (Cap.38)* or Section 140(1)(i) of the *Women’s Charter (Cap.353)*”.

Forced child marriage

Women’s Charter

The issue of forced child marriage is relevant to the issue of CSEC. The legal age of marriage in Singapore is 18 years of age. Section 9 of the Charter indicates that a marriage solemnised in Singapore, or elsewhere, between persons, either of whom is below the age of 18 years, shall be void unless the solemnisation of the marriage was authorized by a special marriage license granted by the minister under Section 21²²⁵. Section 21(2) provides the minister with discretion to grant such a marriage license²²⁶.

3.6.3 Child protection units and child-friendly procedures during investigation and legal proceedings

The Singapore Police Force has specialised units, including the Serious Sexual Crime Branch, in which the officers are trained to investigate particular sex crimes and to appropriately conduct interviews for victims of CSEC in order to ensure the victims’ rights are protected²²⁷. As established by the *National Standards for the Protection of Children*²²⁸, the police collaborate with other child protection agencies (such as CPS, health care services, court and judicial officers, community agencies, child abuse professionals

and schools) to ensure adequate assistance to children. The Attorney General's Chambers and the Singapore Police Force have collaborated to implement the Vulnerable Witness Support Program. A "vulnerable witness" is a person under 16 years of age (or a person with an equivalent mental capacity) that is required by the police or public prosecutor to give evidence in a criminal court case. The Programme allows for sensitive cases to be referred to the Singapore Children's Society, which assigns a trained, volunteer support person to each child witness to help the child deal with stress management and explain court procedures²²⁹.

"Part XI: Offences Against Women and Girls" of the *Women's Charter* contains legal provisions to protect victims of CSEC from the re-traumatisation that can occur as a result of investigative and court procedures. The Charter makes special provisions for girls who are victims of crime under the Charter, including restrictions on publications to provide protection and anonymity, closed courts for victims under 16 years of age and the ability for courts to order detention of victims in a safe location until the criminal proceedings have been carried out, as well as certain provisions for ensuring the safety of girls in urgent need of refuge²³⁰. Furthermore, the *Children and Young Persons Act* provides the foundation for protection and intervention by the relevant authorities if a child or a young person is found to be neglected or abused. During court proceedings, the act restricts the publication or broadcasting of any information or pictures related to the identity of any child or young person involved in the investigative and judicial proceedings²³¹.

Procedures to avoid the re-victimisation of exploited children during investigations and legal proceedings have also been adopted. More specifically, to ease the trauma of repeated interviews, police and MCYS have embarked on joint interviews of child victims of sexual abuse. These joint interviews serve two purposes at once, to investigate the case and to determine the care and protection plan for the child. A training video on joint interviewing of child sexual abuse victims was created for police investigation officers and child protection officers (CPOs). Training began in July 2005²³².

The victim care centre has private counselling rooms and consultation rooms, as well as a children's interview room. Apart from police officers, only authorised officers, including psychologists and counsellors, are allowed access to the rooms. Accused persons and other witnesses cannot access

the centre. The children's interview room is designed like a child's play room to make young victims feel comfortable and at ease²³³.

3.6.4 Training of law enforcement personnel

While specific training on child trafficking for sexual purposes and other forms of CSEC has not yet been conducted, some efforts to build the capacity of law enforcers with regard to child abuse, including child sexual exploitation and human trafficking, have been promoted in recent years. However, more resources should be allocated to ensure sustained training for police, immigration officials and judicial personnel on child trafficking and CSEC specifically.

To increase the professionalism and knowledge of CPOs, in 2006 MCYS collaborated with the Attorney-General's Chambers to conduct training on "The Role of Child Protection Officers in the Singapore Legal System". The training targeted agencies and persons involved in child protection work, including police officers, and covered topics such as the legal aspects of sexual offences against children, the role of CPOs in supporting victims of sexual offences, procedural issues in applying for care and protection orders, giving evidence in court and moot court training²³⁴.

Training for law enforcers on human trafficking and smuggling investigations was provided in 2008 by the Human Smuggling and Trafficking Unit (HSTU) of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)²³⁵. The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA), which oversees border security, is trained in profiling techniques designed to provide them with the skills to conduct profiling of persons, goods and cargo²³⁶. Accordingly, suspicious persons, such as potential sex workers and victims of human trafficking, should be identified and referred for secondary examination before being permitted to cross border lines. Similarly, the police investigating the reports of alleged trafficking and the officers handling such cases are trained in interview techniques to equip them to conduct interviews. Following the enactment in February 2008 of amendments to the Penal Code that criminalise prostitution involving a minor under the age of 18, the police adopted new training programmes and procedures to familiarise officers with the new Penal Code offences and to provide them with the skills to identify potential trafficking victims²³⁷.

Despite these capacity building activities for law enforcers, it has been reported that victims of trafficking, including children, are frequently not identified as victims and are, consequently, criminalised and deported without receiving care and protection²³⁸.

3.6.5 Putting policy into practice: Singapore's laws against commercial sexual exploitation of children

The Government of Singapore is now enforcing Section 376B(1) of the Penal Code, which was enacted in late 2007 and, as mentioned above, makes it illegal for any person to engage in commercial sex with a minor under the age of 18 years²³⁹.

On 6 May 2009 the High Court of Singapore convicted and sentenced Tan Chye Hin under Section 376B(1) for paying to have sexual intercourse with a 17-year-old girl. The victim was a Chinese national who came to Singapore with another 19-year-old female and fell under the care of Wang Minjiang ("Wang") and Wang Youyi²⁴⁰. Wang provided food and lodging for the two females and began prostituting them by recruiting clients, negotiating rates and organising meeting places for the sexual exchanges to take place. Earlier, in August 2008, Wang had pleaded guilty to several charges related to child prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation of children under the *Women's Charter* and the *Penal Code*²⁴¹. Notably, Wang was charged under Section 140(1)(d) of the *Women's Charter* for bringing a 17-year-old female into Singapore for the purpose of prostitution, and under Section 146(1) for living on the earnings of prostitution. He was also charged under 376(B)(1) for aiding Tin Chye Hin in the procurement of the sexual services of a 17-year-old female. For this charge, Wang received 12 months' imprisonment.

Tin Chye Hin received a lesser punishment of nine months' imprisonment under Section 376B(1) of the *Penal Code*. The reasons for the judgment given by Lee Seiu Kin J. of the High Court of Singapore demonstrate the court's attempt to grapple with the new legislation with the best interests of vulnerable children in mind. Prostitution is not illegal in Singapore per se and, although Tin Chye Hin had specifically sought out the 17-year-old victim, with full knowledge of her age, he claimed that he did not know that commercial sex with a minor was illegal. The High Court duly acknowledged that ignorance to the law is no defence, however Tin Chye Hin received a lesser punishment than Wang because Wang's actions (subjecting the victim to child prostitution and living

off of her earnings) were deemed to be more severe and damaging to the victim.

One positive aspect of this case is the court's recognition that it is impossible for a child under the age of 18 years to consent to his/her own exploitation. Accordingly, whether or not the victim agreed to the sexual exchange was deemed irrelevant. The High Court claimed "this case should serve as a strong reminder to the general public that offence[s] involving vulnerable victims will not be tolerated by the courts and that future offenders can expect similar or lengthier periods of incarceration for such offences."²⁴²

FIELD LEVEL RESEARCH ON CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

4.1 Specific objectives

The field level research has five interrelated objectives:

1. To collect evidence of the presence of children and young people that have been trafficked into Singapore for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation;
2. To ascertain the dimensions of the phenomenon, the *modus operandi* of traffickers and characteristics of victims;
3. To ascertain the extent to which institutional responses (of both governmental and non-governmental actors) to this problem are adequate, and to identify areas where improvements can be made, based on victims' own experiences;
4. To collect such information in ways that centre on victims' own accounts of their experiences;
5. To ensure that ethical research standards are maintained throughout the research process, including providing support to participants where requested and ensuring that all trafficked persons are referred to by pseudonyms throughout the report²⁴³.

4.2 Research design: methodology, sites, ethics and limitations of the field research

Methodology, methods and approach: The field research that

informs this report was conducted between October 2009 and March 2010. It utilised a mixed methodology, comprised of qualitative components (semi-structured interviews with victims and key informants, and informal interactions with other stakeholders, including pimps and sex workers) and a quantitative component (surveys with women, young people and minors who have been trafficked to Singapore). The field level research draws on human rights and child-centred research principles. This approach to the research recognises that special considerations should be taken into account when designing and conducting research about these groups, and that research protocols should aim to produce outcomes that have the potential to enhance the rights of the groups being studied. Such an approach also acknowledges that all people, including vulnerable children and young people, have the right to the conditions necessary for their survival and development, and this recognition is connected with the duties and responsibilities of states under international conventions, such as the *CRC* (1989), and various national laws.

Initially, obtaining access to trafficked persons (who generally constitute a 'hidden population') presented a major obstacle to this research, which relies overwhelmingly on victim interviews and surveys (see *International Migration*, 2007 for further discussion of these issues). Trafficked persons, especially minors, are closely monitored by their abusers and are subject to high levels of surveillance. This makes it extremely difficult to approach them directly without exposing them to possible negative repercussions from those controlling them. The research team adhered to the principle of not 'paying' for potential participants' time; a practice that, in the context of prostitution, was felt to be ethically problematic. In addition to the issue of access, trafficking for CSE in Singapore draws on a large range of different national groups, including (in no particular order) Filipinos/as, Indonesians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thais, Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Indians. The research could, therefore, best proceed where research assistants from those nationalities, with an understanding of the issue of human trafficking and/or direct links with the communities involved conducted much of the fieldwork. In all, three research assistants were selected, focusing on Indonesian, Bangladeshi and Chinese nationals, respectively²⁴⁴. The lead researcher conducted all of the interviews with Filipinas and some interviews with Indonesians.

Because levels and modes of access to these different national groups were varied, researchers adopted a

case study approach to elicit more in-depth information from particular national groups. Due to the gratefully acknowledged cooperation of the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in Singapore and YMKK (Yayasan Mitra Kesehatan Kemanusiaan), an NGO on Batam Island, Filipinas and Indonesians were selected as the two nationalities for quantitative case studies. Because samples for other nationalities (Chinese and Bangladeshi) were smaller, they were not subjected to quantitative analysis. The research did elicit enough information about Chinese, Bangladeshi and Thai nationals to be able to put forth a reasonable picture of their circumstances. Table 3.1 provides the numbers of respondents in each national group included in the research. Anecdotal and background information was collected for other nationalities, but direct interviews were not undertaken with these groups (see section 4.7).

Because there are commonly both adults and minors trafficked into Singapore for CSE in each of the nationalities listed above – and often to the same venues - it was difficult to focus on minors in isolation from the wider trafficking context in which they were situated. Four discrete groups, therefore, emerged from the research:

1. Children (defined as persons under 18 years of age);
2. Youth (defined as persons between 18 and 21 years; note that according to Article 372 (relating to prostitution of minors) of the *Penal Code*, a minor is defined as any person under 21 years of age);
3. Young women (21 to 24 years of age); and
4. Older women (adult women older than 24 years of age).

Trafficked persons in these groups participated in the research in two ways:

1. As respondents to questions about their own experiences of trafficking for CSE in Singapore (experiential); and/or
2. As respondents to questions about their knowledge of experiences of trafficking for CSE in Singapore of other children and youth (observational).

For the purposes of this report, however, the personal experiences of older women (group 4) are not discussed in detail²⁴⁵. The primary way in which these interviews and survey responses contribute to the discussion here is in terms of the observational information they were able to provide regarding the other three groups of participants. Young

women (group 3) were deemed an appropriate inclusion for detailed discussion of their own experiences in this report since some entered the sex industry as victims (either in Singapore or another country) when they were minors. For example, several of the Filipinas who fell into group 3 had previously been to Japan as 'entertainers; and some had entered Japan when they were 17-years-old and/or had been recruited when they were 17 years old. Similarly, several of the Indonesian participants had entered prostitution through internal trafficking within Indonesia when they were minors and were moved to Singapore later (either as minors or as youth or young women). Two participants are quoted here to illustrate this migratory trajectory of commercial sexual exploitation (note that all ages provided in the quoted stories refer to the age of participants when they entered Singapore, not their current age):

I'm a rebel kid in my family and I ran away from home when I was 16-years-old after I had a fight with my mum and dad. I went to Jakarta by myself and I worked in a shop for several months. I contacted my parents and told them I was working in Jakarta and, until now, they still think I am working in Jakarta. After that I met this woman in Jakarta who offered me a job in Batam Island as a waitress in a cafe. The offer sounded very good and so I followed her to Batam, but when we got there she sold me to a KTV bar in Nagoya area [a district of Batam Island]. I just surrendered because I have no idea about Batam... meaning I have no idea how to get back to Jakarta or to leave the bar. After I finished my contract [meaning she paid off the arbitrary debt imposed on her when she arrived], the following year I stopped this work. I had managed to save only IRP1.5 million. Then I met a friend of mine who worked in the same prostitution place as me [Nagoya district]. She offered me work in Singapore doing the same job. I agreed and she handled all of my documents. I stayed in Singapore two weeks doing prostitution. At that time I just turned 19 years old. (Ss, 19 years, Indonesian).

I was in Japan when I just turned 18 years old. I was recruited by a Filipina when I was 17 years old, but by the time she arranged my passports and processed all my documents I was 18 already. This Filipina worked for an agency that recruits girls to go abroad as entertainers. I applied for a dancer but when I got to Japan it's in a bar where the men are touching my body and trying to kiss me. Some of them want to buy my time to take me out of the club for sex.

I thought when I came to Singapore a couple of years later that it's different from Japan because my recruiter tell me it's a waitress in a restaurant and I can earn big tips from the customer[s]. (Ar, 22 years, Filipina).

Determining age (and therefore what group the participants fell into for the purposes of the research) also presented quite a challenge. Many minors and young people entering Singapore for the purposes of engaging in commercial sexual labour travel on documents where their age has been changed (false passport), or using another individual's passport, with their own photo substituted (real passport, not belonging to them). Many participants interviewed looked much younger than the age that they disclosed or was provided in the travel documents they held. The field notes of the lead researcher regarding one Indonesian sex worker located on Batam Island illustrate this problem:

We met "Kt" at hotel "X" in Batam, where she was living and working as a sex worker. She told us that she was 25-years-old at that time and she said she had come to Batam Island with her uncle and step sister when she was still a teenager. She said that she went back to Jakarta, and after that she was recruited by someone to go to Singapore for sex work. At that time she stated she was 19-years-old. To me, she looked like she was only 19 or 20-years-old when we met her – which would mean that she probably entered Singapore when she was only 15 or 16-years-old. She was vague about years and dates so there was no way to be sure that she was really 25-years-old, or that she wasn't a minor when she first went to Singapore, even though my research assistant and I were sure this was the case. She was still under the control of a mami (mana-san or pimp/maintainer) when I met her so she had to be careful about what she told us and I didn't want to push the issue too far. One thing that stuck in my mind about the information she shared though was the numbers. She said that when she went to Singapore she had to sleep with 110 clients to pay her "costs" [debt] and only after that she was free to make any money for herself. In two weeks she calculated 110 "free" clients and another 200 to make any money for herself. If she was only 15 or 16-years-old then she probably had some kind of repercussions health-wise. (Field notes, Dr Yea, 7 April 2010).

In addition to the interviews and surveys conducted with victims of trafficking to Singapore, key interviews

were conducted with individuals from several relevant organisations, including the Philippines Embassy, the United States Embassy, the Thai Embassy, migrant worker/sex worker NGOs in Singapore (such as the Student Christian Movement (Project X), Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) and the Humanitarian Organisation for Migrant Economies (HOME)) and migrant worker/sex worker NGOs in the source countries (such as ECPAT Philippines, the Alit Foundation, Indonesia, the Alliance Anti-traffic (ATT) Thailand and Foundation for Women, among others). Interviews with key informants focused on the following topics: type of organisation and scope of work related to support for trafficked persons in Singapore; profiles of victims supported and ways victims access support; information about numbers and types of cases; and issues concerning lack of capacity and areas where improvements could be made. Through this information, knowledge about the trafficking of minors into Singapore's sex industry could be ascertained. Finally, newspaper articles related to migrant prostitution in Singapore were collected and subjected to content analysis.

Sites: Within Singapore, victims of trafficking for CSE are deployed in a range of different locations. Because of ethical concerns (see Ethics, below), wherever possible participants were not met or interviewed in trafficking destinations (the exception to this general principle was with Chinese participants in Geylang, as no other means of access was deemed possible). For Filipinas, interviews normally took place at the Philippines Embassy or at a safe house operated by an individual who supports persons trafficked for CSE in Singapore. For Indonesian participants, all interviews took place on Batam Island or Bintan Island in the Riau Islands of Indonesia. Participants were either staying in shelters or were in sex industry venues (the latter were normally interviewed in a safe house or another location chosen by the participant herself). Chinese participants were interviewed either in the HOME shelter in Singapore or in a venue chosen by the participant herself. All Bangladeshi participants were met and interviewed in Dhaka after their return from Singapore. None were staying in shelters or rehabilitation facilities. These participants were located through the personal networks of the research assistant.

Interviews were conducted with Filipinas, Indonesians, Bangladeshis and Chinese women (see Table 4.1, below) by either the lead researcher or by a research assistant. Interview topics were developed by the lead researcher and revised with the assistance of ECPAT International. Topics included: bio-data and background information, details of recruitment,

movement and deployment information; circumstances of exploitation within Singapore (and possibly in a third, or transit country), the prevalence of violence and abuse while in the trafficking situation, health issues (including sexual health), mode or exit from CSE and post-exit circumstances (including experiences with police or other governmental authorities, as well as with support organisations).

TABLE 4.1 – VICTIM PARTICIPANTS*

Nationality	Number of children (under 18 years)	Number of young people (18-21 years)	Number of younger women (21-24 years)	Number of older women (above 24 years)	TOTAL
Filipina	0	7	12	32	51
Indonesian	6	18	18	8	50
Chinese	0	0	0	5	5
Bangladeshi	0	0	2	3	5
TOTAL	6	25	32	48	111

*Age of first entry into Singapore for sex-related activities.

Ethics: This research project followed recommendations and protocols developed by a number of international organisations concerning interviewing persons, including minors, trafficked for CSE (WHO 2002, UNIAP 2008). All participants were provided with a participant information sheet that detailed the nature of the research and the expectations for their participation, as well as contact information of the lead researcher/research assistant, should participants wish to follow-up for any reason. Participants had the opportunity to sign a consent form or to provide verbal consent to participate in the study. In cases where verbal consent was given, the research team member recorded the consent. Many participants were understandably reluctant to sign a written consent form because they remained in vulnerable circumstances, even after exiting their exploitative situations, thus, verbal consent was given in most cases.

Limitations of the field research:

- Lack of information concerning the trajectories and circumstances of victims from Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) countries – Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar - due to an inability to directly access or otherwise gather information about these groups²⁴⁶;
- The majority of participants were not children (group 1), primarily due to a lack of access;
- Due to the unique circumstances of individual participants (such as having to leave Singapore quickly, or being

unable to trace individuals after they returned to their home countries), researchers had only a limited amount of time to spend with some participants. Spending additional time could have helped researchers to gain a more accurate or comprehensive picture of participants' circumstances.

- Refusal of some NGOs and support organisations in Singapore to provide information that could have extended the research.

Some academic research on trafficking for CSE in Southeast Asia, including on Indonesia's Riau Islands²⁴⁷, has made the rather disturbing finding that some NGOs have inflated the numbers of victims located/supported in an effort to justify their anti-trafficking activities and ensure that donor support is forthcoming. For this study, the field researchers carefully scrutinised NGO statistics on numbers of trafficking victims and gave NGOs clear guidelines to follow in identifying trafficking cases amongst migrant worker clients. In this regard, every effort was made to ensure that the numbers of cases documented here – either as direct participants or anecdotally – are reliable and not inflated or manipulated. This chapter also presents the participants' narratives as they stand and does not sensationalise any participant's experiences. Nor does it narrowly focus on stories depicting the most dire cases. It is important to recognise that trafficked persons include a wide range of experiences and profiles and that focusing on selected "worst cases" acts only to perpetuate dramatic stereotypes of child victims that can inadvertently de-legitimise the claims of victims whose experiences fall outside of this narrow band.

4.3 Participants /victims profiles

The following information, relating to participant profiles, is limited to Filipina and Indonesian participants.

Filipinas

Common characteristics included:

- Most had graduated high school (see Figure 4.1)
- Most had responsibilities to care for family members (including their own children, even where they fell into group 2 or 3 themselves)
- Most were single mothers
- Most were unemployed or working in the service sector before coming to Singapore
- Most were in volatile financial circumstances as a result

of some crisis event (eg, the closure of their place of employment or the sickness and/or medical costs of a relative)

- Most were from, and recruited in, Luzon or Manila.

FIGURE 4.1 – EDUCATION (FILIPINAS)

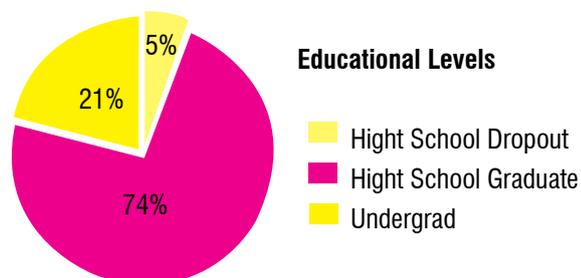
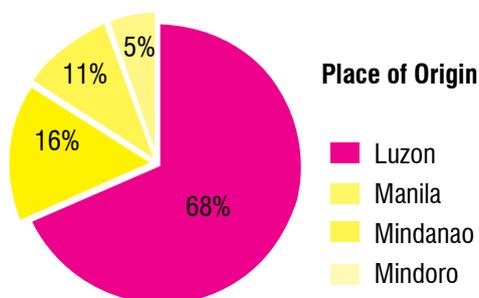


FIGURE 4.2 - PLACE OF ORIGIN (FILIPINAS)



48

Indonesians

Common characteristics included:

- Most had graduated high school (see Figure 4.3)
- Most had responsibilities to care for family members
- Most were single and did not have children
- Most were working in the service sector or sex industry before coming to Singapore
- Most were from Java, but were recruited in Batam Island²⁴⁹

FIGURE 4.3 EDUCATION (INDONESIANS)

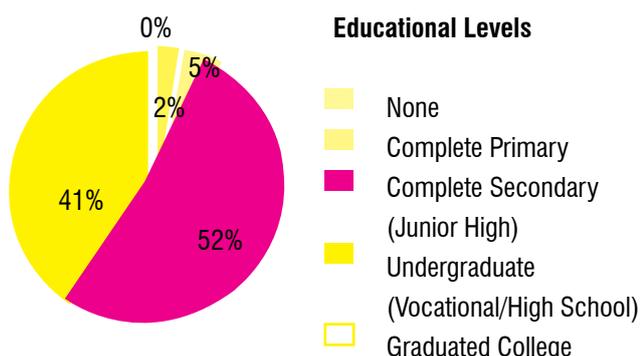
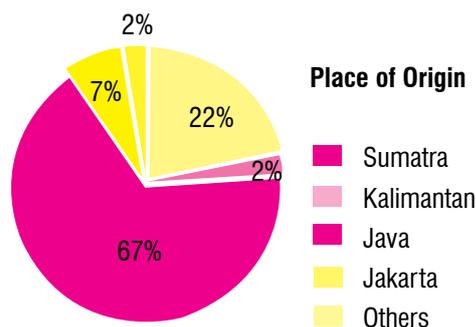


FIGURE 4.4 PLACE OF ORIGIN (INDONESIANS)



In sum, there are a few commonalities and differences in victim profiles. As described above, a large proportion of the Indonesian participants in this study were internally trafficked within Indonesia, or were internal migrants within Indonesia, eventually being deployed in commercial sex venues, venues on Batam Island or, less commonly, Bintan Island prior to being trafficked to Singapore. Therefore, many were already involved in prostitution prior to being trafficked to Singapore, including some who were trafficked internally as minors or young people. For Filipinas it was normally the case that they had no previous experience of prostitution, although some related that they had previously been to Japan as entertainers.

It may also be said that in Singapore’s sex industry, migrants are broadly divided into two categories: those who come voluntarily and independently, and those whose movement and deployment is facilitated and controlled by another person. Almost universally, those whose entry and deployment is controlled by another person(s) are either trafficked and/or debt bonded. As detailed in the previous chapter, trafficking occurs in two forms. First, those who are deceived about both the type of work they will be doing (ie, not knowing they will be entering prostitution or other forms of sexual labour) and the conditions of that work. Second, those who know they will be working in prostitution and/or other forms of sexual labour, but are deceived about the conditions associated with this work. Note that, for those who enter Singapore to work in prostitution and/or other sexual activities as minors, their consent to and/or full knowledge of the type of work and working conditions is irrelevant and they would still be considered victims of trafficking. Notably, trafficked and non-trafficked migrants involved in prostitution are often found in the same venues (brothels, pubs, bars, hotels, streets/districts), although their circumstances may be vastly different. It is for this reason that the study also drew on interviews and informal discussions with some non-trafficked migrants involved in prostitution.

4.4 Recruitment and movement

Filipinas

Filipinas were normally recruited by a friend, acquaintance or neighbour who was referred to generally as an “agent”. A few others were recruited by people they did not previously know. It should be noted that very few of the participants were actively seeking to migrate abroad for work. Rather, the agents (or a “friend” who recommended the participant contact a particular agent) usually approached the participant. The following are typical descriptions provided by participants concerning the recruitment process:

I was recruited by an acquaintance of mine. Her name is “Ly”. She said to me, “You want to go to Singapore? It’s good money there and the work is nice. Yes, good work and big money.” She said she knows the situation of Singapore, but she never told me that the work is very bad (Ar, 22 years).

I met this woman “Li” in the supermarket in Pampanga. She asked me if I wanted to go to Singapore to work. She said I could be a waitress in a pub called “V”. So I am expecting to work as a waitress. I never met Li before – only she approach me in the supermarket (Ja, 23 years).

Filipina participants either came directly to Singapore from Manila or Subic by plane, or indirectly via a flight to Kuala Lumpur, as Am (23 years) recounted:

First we flew to KL [Kuala Lumpur]. Someone picked us up from the airport and took us to a house about an hour away. We stayed there for a few days. Then we took a flight to Singapore. There was a Filipina helper in the house in KL and she gave each of us PP 10,000 for show money and the ticket. She said, “If you get a problem with immigration don’t call me.” She gave me the number of the house in Tiong Barhu.

These low level recruiters usually receive a commission from an agent based in Singapore or the owner of the venue (pub or bar) where participants are to be deployed. Unlike in other sectors, such as construction work or paid domestic

work, it is not common for labour brokering agencies to be involved in the recruitment and deployment of Filipinas in the entertainment and sex industry in Singapore²⁵⁰. Table 4.2 details the relationship between Filipina participants and the person who recruited them.

TABLE 4.2 – RECRUITER’S RELATIONSHIP WITH VICTIM (FILIPINAS)

RECRUITER/TRAFFICKER ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP TO PARTICIPANT		
Nature of relationship	Type	Number of respondents recruited in this manner
Known to victim	Acquaintance/Neighbour	7
	Friend	0
	Relative	0
Referred to by a person known to victim	Referred by people the victim knew/trusted	7
Unknown to victim	Victim approached by a person who was previously unknown to them	4
Employment agencies	Job placement agency (go direct/referred)	0
Others	Others	1

Indonesians

Like Filipinas, Indonesians enter Singapore on Social Visit Pass Visas (SVPs). Indonesians in Singapore’s sex industry are broadly divided into two categories: those who come voluntarily and independently, and those whose movement and deployment is facilitated and controlled by another person. Almost universally, those whose entry and deployment is controlled by another person(s) are trafficked. In these cases, victims are deployed in particular Lorongs (lanes) in Geylang, where they are either openly displayed to prospective clients or are hidden in a nearby hotel where customers are brought to them²⁵¹.

As described above (Participants/victims profiles), a large proportion of the Indonesian participants in this study were internally trafficked within Indonesia – eventually being deployed in a sex establishment on Batam Island – prior to their trafficking to Singapore. De’s experience was typical of many of the participants from Indonesia:

I was sold to a brothel in Batam Island when I was around 14-years-old. I was forced to serve customers here even when I was having my period. I met a friend in Batam who promised she could get me a passport and ID for a

job in Singapore. One day she asked me to follow her to Singapore for shopping. She said she was going to buy me some clothes and things. My friend brought me to a hotel in Singapore after we arrive and sold me to customers. I never got any of the money from this. My friend took my passport and my documents so I couldn't run (De, 17 years).

Another participant's experience was quite similar to De's:

When I finished my beauty course when I'm 15 years old, I tried to send an application [for a job] at a salon in Semarang, and they accepted me there. At that salon, there is a person called "Aunt Lu", and she asked me to work in a salon too; but not in Semarang. She said I can work in Jakarta and I am very excited about that, but I have to ask my family first. Finally, my family agreed with my decision to work in Jakarta with Aunt Lu and the next day I went to Jakarta with her. In Jakarta we stayed in Aunt Lu's house for two days; after that Aunt Lu said to me that the vacancy that she offered me is not available anymore, because there is a person who already filled that position. She said there's a vacancy in Tanjung Pinang, and her friend already open a new salon there and they need many employees. She promised that the salary is quite big and I can stay at the residence of the employer.

On June 24 [2009] we went to Tanjung Pinang [Bintan Island] on a ship, then we arrived at Kijang Harbor and she asked me to stay with her friend called "Db". She said Db is the person who opened the new salon. Then aunt Lu returned to Batam with the reason that she said she wanted to pick up another employee. But after a week she didn't return and then I knew she had already gone back to Semarang. In Tanjung Pinang, Db just asked me to stay with her because the beauty salon is still under construction, then she made a passport for me and she said the reason is that many customers are from Singapore and Malaysia, so sometimes we have to go to those countries if there's a customer that needs our service. I don't know at that time that I've been tricked and I just believed what she said. After that she took me to Singapore saying I am needed for doing the makeup of the customer. I stay at her place in Singapore for ten days and I must service the clients who come there. At that time I am still a virgin (Mt, 16 years).

False promises of good jobs in other sectors in places like Batam, Bintan or Jakarta; initial work in other sectors in these migrant locations followed by recruitment into the sex

industry; or trafficking to these locations and then further trafficking to Singapore are the three most common modes of recruitment for Indonesian participants.

It is common for pimps in Singapore to contact managers/ owners of bars and brothels in locations such as Batam and Bintan to request that a certain number of girls/women (age usually specified) be brought to Singapore for waiting clients. The profits are then divided between the pimp in Singapore and the Batam manager (mami or papi). Table 4.3 provides information about the relationship between recruiter and participant.

TABLE 4.3 – RECRUITER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH VICTIM (INDONESIANS)

RECRUITER/TRAFFICKER ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP TO PARTICIPANT		
Nature of relationship	Type	Number of respondents recruited in this manner
Known to victim	Acquaintance/ neighbour	2
	Friend	13
	Relative	0
Referred to by a person known to victim	Referred by people the victim knew/trusted	15
Unknown to victim	Victim approached by a person who was previously unknown to them	3
Employment agencies	Job placement agency (go direct/referred)	0
Others	Others	9

What is important to note here is that most of the Filipinas in this study were not actively seeking to migrate abroad for the purpose of employment. Because their recruiters often knew them personally, or knew of their situations (as neighbours or friends of friends of the participants), participants almost always stated that they were approached by someone who offered them the opportunity to work abroad. Conversely, most of the Indonesian participants were already internal migrants or internal victims of trafficking who had made their way to Batam Island, Bintan Island or a major city such as Jakarta and were offered the opportunity to work in Singapore from there (either in the sex industry or another occupation). A smaller number of participants (2 Filipinas and 4 Indonesians) stated that they were invited to Singapore for a holiday or shopping trip by the person who trafficked them for CSE.

4.5 Exploitation in Singapore

Participants narrated several problems relating to their exploitation in Singapore. These included: a difference between the work described to them prior to their departure for Singapore and the work they were expected to carry out upon arrival in Singapore (deception in recruitment); the existence of a debt that bonded them to the place where they were deployed (debt bondage); being locked in their living quarters and/or being monitored or accompanied when outside of the work or accommodation space (removal of freedom of movement and association); other promised conditions associated with their employment not being met, including denial of adequate food, being charged rental on their accommodation and excessive “working” hours with inadequate break time (contract fraud); and health issues. These themes came through repeatedly in interviews and surveys with victims, and in key informant interviews. Each of these issues is dealt with in turn in this section of the chapter.

It is important to highlight that all participants entered Singapore on a legal visa. Most participants entered Singapore on SVPs, while a small number of participants had applications for entertainer visas made on their behalf after arrival; usually by their employer or agent (this applied primarily to the Filipina and Chinese participants). In the case of trafficked minors, forged passports were also used (the date of birth was usually changed so that the minor appeared to be an adult). The ASEAN common agreement allows for relatively open movement between member nations for nationals of member states, while China has a similar visa arrangement due to the predominance of the Han Chinese racial group in Singapore’s population. For Bangladeshi participants, a range of different mechanisms were used by intermediaries and traffickers to gain SVPs for participants. The primary mechanism detected for Bangladeshi participants in this study was marital fraud, which means that false marriages between participants and Bangladeshi male migrant workers in Singapore were established by “agents” in Bangladesh using the identities of Bangladeshi men, usually without the latter’s knowledge or permission. Victims were subsequently brought into Singapore on SVPs as “wives”, citing the couple’s desire to conceive a child as the justification for visa approval and entry.

For all those entering on SVPs, irrespective of nationality,

extensions of an additional month were normally made through an application (which can be made online) to the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA). Some participants stated that they travelled to Johor Bahru in Peninsular Malaysia close to the expiration date of their visa in order to return to Singapore with a new SVP (and so Johor Bahru emerged as a prominent transit point in trafficking operations where Singapore was a destination). The normal period of stay for a SVP is one month, but Indonesian participants stated that they would sometimes be given only a few days or less than two weeks (it was not clear why this was the case). It is important to highlight the issue of the visa here for two reasons: First, it is often (mistakenly) assumed that victims of trafficking are always “illegal” entrants into a destination country – perhaps having been smuggled across international borders - which is not the case for victims of trafficking for CSE in Singapore. Second, although all participants breached the conditions of their SVPs by engaging in prostitution, most had not done so willingly or knowingly. This is important because government authorities (immigration and police) perceive all persons engaging in prostitution in Singapore as criminals who have broken immigration laws deliberately and with full knowledge. This view needs, at a minimum, to be challenged.

Deceptive recruitment

There were essentially two main types of deception in recruitment: First, situations where participants were deceived about both the type and conditions of work. Second, situations where participants were deceived about the conditions of work only. In other words, some participants knew they would be engaging in some form of sex-related activity in Singapore, but were deceived about the conditions attached to that work. As mentioned above, under the *UN Trafficking Protocol*, both situations would be classified as constituting trafficking. Additionally, if the victim was a minor, the element of deception need not even be present (this third scenario is certainly relevant to some of the Indonesian participants).

The role of informal agents and recruiters is essential to understanding the process of deceptive recruitment. FI (24 years, Filipina) described her recruitment and subsequent “work” as follows:

“Ma” [recruiter in the Philippines] told me I have a salary of PP25,000 per month (SGD 775) plus SGD30 allowance for my food every week. My work is to be performing artist, but

*“Sf” [boss of the pub] push me to go with customers. One my friends introduced me to Ma. She [MA] told me that the owner of the club in Singapore is so kind. It is not true. He always lock the door and one time its three days no food; only water. I have to clean the toilets and the pub before starting to work. We start at 4 pm and supposed to close 1 am but sometimes Sf lets customer in the back and we stay longer. He just pushes me to the customer and if I say “no, I don’t like”, then he yells at me and says “F**k you. Your daughter or your mother [in the Philippines] must die. You must follow me”. I sit with the customer and I cry. I say [to the customer] “I want to go back to the Philippines”, but he doesn’t help me. The customers all try to touch... I go to the CR [comfort room] and cry. I called my parents and said to call to the police, so they did... I was in Japan as an entertainer for three months as a singer and then back to the Philippines last year. Ma said the work in Singapore will be the same as Japan.*

There are several important points to note about the above narrative, which echo findings for some of the other participants as well: the recruiter promising an unrealistic salary and additional allowance (see Breach of contract, below); the comparison with Japan, which acts to create false imagery about the work in Singapore; the use of threats and verbal abuse by the boss to scare FI into complying with his wishes; and the use of punishments (in this case denial of food) to secure compliance. FI also mentions customers, which are further discussed below. Both FI and her companion, who was deployed at the same pub, related that when they asked their boss if they could leave, citing the fact that the work was not what they expected, they were told that they would need to each pay SGD6000 to “cover his losses”; an impossible amount for both participants.

Concerning the ways participants attempted to rail against the duties, Ct’s (20 years, Filipina) experience was common:

I’m shocked when I get here [Singapore]. The customers try and touch... I’m always sitting [at the bar] and try not to get the customer... I try to dance with my customer instead of sit with them. They try to touch me and I can’t do anything because the manager is watching. My manager is angry at me because of this and shouts at me coz I not see enough customers.

Many Indonesian participants were deceptively recruited for employment in other sectors (as in the narrative of Mt, related in recruitment and movement, above). “St” (17

years), however, was invited to Singapore by a man who was a “friend” from her home in west Java. He told her that he was taking her for a vacation.

From “P” in west Java we went to the train station in Bandung by bus, then we went to Jakarta-Gambir by plane, from there we go to... Batam by airplane. After we arrived there we used the ferry to go to Tanjung Uban [Bintan Island] and from there in the agent’s car to Kijang. When I got there it’s a big surprise because that place is a prostitution place. I cried and realised “Ba” [agent] sold me to that place as a sex worker. Then he made my passport and resident’s identification card so I can go to Singapore, but the address and my age has been changed. When we went to Singapore he said we are just going to look around and do some sightseeing, but actually he sold me at Geylang and he took all my documents. I stay there for three months. I don’t know I have a debt or how much it is, but when we get back to Kijang, Ba said that the money I earned for him isn’t enough to pay my debt and all of my necessities. The only money I got was SGD500 in three months and that was a tip from the clients who feel sorry for me.

We also interviewed an Indonesian national whose experience was slightly different from those discussed above. “Ik” (20 years) was sold in Batam Island as the “second wife” (mistress) of a Singaporean man who came to Batam to purchase Ik. As she recounted:

When I’m 17-years-old I got raped by my stepfather, but I am afraid to tell my mother about it. So I decided to run away from home and go to Jakarta. After a few months of living in Jakarta I got into a relationship with a man who has a wife and he wants me to be his “hidden wife”, but I didn’t want [to do] that. After two years this boyfriend asked me to move to Batam. After we arrived in Batam he introduced me to a man and said this man is from Singapore. It turned out that my boyfriend sold me to the Singaporean man as a second wife. The man my boyfriend sold me to went back and forth from Singapore and took me to Singapore first time when I’m 20-years-old.

Thus, recruitment practices are complicated and diverse for both Indonesians and Filipinas. They include a range of offers that extend from work in another part of Indonesia and in a sector other than prostitution (for Indonesians), to work in Singapore as a waitress (for some Indonesians and many Filipinas), to work in prostitution but with high levels of deceit about the conditions attached to the work (for many

Indonesian participants), to offers to travel to Singapore for a holiday or sightseeing and shopping (for a smaller number of Indonesians and Filipinas). Recruiters always engaged in a trusted relationship with participants, and, in all nationality groups, participants were normally “sought out”, rather than actively seeking to migrate to Singapore for any reason. These characteristics of the recruitment processes open up possibilities for both preventative and punitive measures (against recruiters) to be implemented. Criminal justice proceedings against the recruiter of a Filipina destined for Singapore (detailed in section 4.7 of this chapter) provides some further insights into the rigour with which retributive action against recruiters can be taken, drawing on progressive legislation recently introduced in the Philippines.

Debt and debt bondage

Debt bondage was the principal mechanism used to ensure that participants did not leave their situations of exploitation. It was also the main way that participants were pressured into performing sexual labour²⁵². Debt is accumulated in three ways: debt for the costs of migration (including air tickets, passports and agent’s/recruiter’s “fees”); debt for the costs of living (including accommodation, food and other expenses, such as transportation) in Singapore; debt incurred as a result of punishments and penalties (usually for not meeting a drink quota, in the case of those working in pubs and clubs, or for refusing to perform particular services, such as sex without a condom). Thus, the debts are either: a) arbitrarily imposed and do not relate to any actual sum agreed to by participants prior to their departure for Singapore; or b) agreed to in part or full, but with the expectation that the ability to repay the stated amount will be easily achieved through high salaries in Singapore and without the arbitrary imposition of further debt²⁵³. The single purpose of the debt is to induce extreme financial stress on participants as an indirect force pushing them into prostitution. Participants who discussed this debt scenario, without exception, used the word “force” to describe how they were pushed to provide sexual services.

The following were common in participant’s narratives about debt, cumulative additions to the debt and sexual labour:

My agent buys my ticket and pay for my passport, but she never say I have a credit of SGD1800. I am shocked when I arrive here [in Singapore]. In two months I not pay my credit because I don’t want to go with the customer. I have no

money. My other friend [workmate] buys me food because I have no money to eat. If I take a tip from a customer I am fined SGD150, which is added to my credit. The house costs SGD30 a day, so even if I get SGD30 drink commissions, I just pay the house, not the credit. I realise from the other girls that the only way I can pay my credit is to go out with the customer [for sex] (At, 23 years, Filipina).

A friend of a friend – a woman – she said she’s working here [in Singapore] a year ago as a waitress. She said it’s a bar but she never go out with the customer. She said the boss and the customer never force to go out. I know [I will be] an entertainer in a pub, but not forced to go with the customers. My recruiter only told me about serving drinks and entertaining [chatting with] customers, she did not tell me about the utang [debt]. She only told me I have to pay my expense, like food and rent. But when I get here my boss said if I’m going to pay my debt then I can get salary. He never say exactly what the debt is and I’m shocked because I don’t know there is a debt. The first night in the pub I say I want to go back the Philippines but my boss said that I should pay my debt first, which is about PP45,000 (SGD1400). He said that is for the air ticket and work permit [entertainer’s visa]. That funny coz I never get my work permit yet (Kn, 24 years, Filipina).

Notable in both Kn’s and At’s narratives is a clear inflation of the debt. With the emergence of budget airlines within the southeast Asian region and the low cost of obtaining a work permit from ICA, the collective amount owed should be closer to SGD400. The lowest debt recorded for Filipina participants was SGD1200, while the highest was SGD3800. For Indonesian participants the issue of debt was also commonplace. Indonesian participants could expect a debt of anywhere between SGD800 and SGD2500.

“My” (17 years, Indonesian) was also not told of a debt until she had reached the transit point in her trafficking experience (her narrative also provides further insights into issues of recruitment, discussed above):

When I am still in my hometown [in Banten] there are two guys and one woman and they said their boss asked them to find women and girls at the village to work in another country, and they will handle all the costs and be guaranteed to find a job. Then I ask permission from my dad and my dad agrees with me, but my mum is quite worried if I work far

away from home. At that time they offered me work in Batam at a cafe, but in fact I only stay overnight in Batam and then they took me to Tanjung Pinang [Bintan Island]. From my hometown, they took me on a bus to Tanjung Priok, Jakarta; we go to the harbour in Batam with a ship. The next day they took me to Tegala Punggung Harbour to go to Tanjung Pinang. The second day after we arrived there they made me a passport so I can work in Malaysia or Singapore. The two men forced me to have sex then. If I don't agree they said they will throw me away to an island.

In the beginning I don't know I have a debt. I only know it when I am in Tanjung Pinang on the sixth day. They said the debt is for all the costs to take me abroad to work. So in Singapore I don't earn money because mami takes all the money to pay the debt. Until now I don't know the amount of the debt; only that they take all the money I earn from selling my body in Singapore.

Breach of contract

Breach of contract refers to the situation where a migration/labour agent, agency or employer in Singapore does not fulfil the obligations stated in the contract (also called “agreements” by some of the participants) and/or fails to adhere to the working conditions outlined in the contract. A contract, for the purposes of this report, includes both verbal and written contracts (the vast majority of contracts are verbal). Common areas for breach of contract include: venue of work, hours of work, entitlements relating to the provision of food and accommodation and conditions for performing sex work/prostitution. Importantly, even where written contracts were made, participants stated that they did not hold a copy of their contract and only saw the contract briefly. The contract breaches described here relate only to those participants who agreed to come to Singapore for employment purposes (whether in prostitution or another sector), and do not apply to those participants (two Filipinas and six Indonesians) that traveled to Singapore under the illusion that they were sightseeing or “looking around” (although, once in CSE in Singapore, many of the same conditions pertaining to hours of work, food, etc. also applied to their situations).

Hours of “work”: All participants – whether in brothels, on the street or in pubs and clubs - worked upwards of 16 hours per day, seven days a week. Common working hours

are from around 5 pm to 3 am. Some participants, especially Filipinas deployed in pubs and clubs, stated that they would often be made to stay in the pub after it had closed to clean or to see “VIP clients”. This was often used as a form of punishment for not meeting a drink quota or earning enough drink points. Indonesian participants stated that they would have to see customers anytime there was a demand, which could be during times when they were ostensibly able to rest. As “My” (17 years, Indonesian) stated, *“There’s no work hours rule. Whenever the clients appear, I must service them.”*

Food: Depriving participants of food is a common strategy to punish them for not seeing enough clients. Some participants had been promised a food allowance that was not, in fact, given. Others were given meagre amounts of food, inadequate for proper daily sustenance. Approximately half of the participants understood that their food would be provided for them free of charge. The other half knew they would have to pay for their own food, but were deprived of adequate income to be able to afford to buy food. “Dn” (24 years, Indonesian) recalled that, *“There were four of us girls under one mami and she gave us food one time a day only at 5pm. She gave us one bottle of water between the four of us and that was all for the entire day.”*

Accommodation: Half of the Filipina participants stated that they knew in advance that they had to pay for their accommodation (usually a shared room in a hotel or in an apartment). The average cost was between SGD20 to SGD30 per day for each participant, which was to be deducted from her salary or added to her debt if she did not see enough customers to cover the cost. This latter scenario applied to the majority of the participants who complained that they were perpetually in a debt situation because they were unable to afford to pay costs such as food and accommodation with their earnings. This was contrary to the expectations of the participants, who stated that they were lead to believe that the income they earned would be adequate to meet these expenses. Indonesian participants also had the costs of accommodation deducted from their earnings in Singapore, usually at around SGD5 per day for a shared hotel room. A few participants stayed at the house/apartment of their mami or papi’s “connection” in Singapore.

Remuneration: The above points relating to food and accommodation point to a concern expressed by all but two of the participants: they were promised income that far exceeded what they actually received while in Singapore. Because of exorbitant – and almost always inflated – debts

that were deducted from salaries/earnings, participants were left without any income, apart from occasional tips from “sympathetic” customers. Moreover, several participants stated that accepting tips from customers was not allowed and they would be fined or punished if they were discovered to be in possession of tip money.

Removal of freedom of movement and association

Common to the experiences of all participants was the removal of freedom of movement and association. The particular geographies of this control and surveillance varied according to the venue/area that victims were deployed to in Singapore. For the Filipinas, only two of those interviewed held the key to the apartment where they were staying. The others stated that either their manager or someone else (a trusted girl or a “watcher”) held the key. The Indonesian participants stated that when they were not working, their controller would make them stay in the hotel/apartment room. The most common reason the participants identified for this was that they would be more likely to be picked up by the police if they were “out on the street” during daylight hours.

The participants were also closely monitored during work time. For Filipinas, the pub/club provided a space of confinement and control. Participants were usually ferried between their accommodation and the pub/club by the manager or “watcher”. If they travelled independently, it was always with one of the “trusted girls”. As “Ch” (20 years, Filipina) recalled, “We are not allowed to go out [of the apartment]. We don’t hold the key. *The only girl with the key is a long-timer [Filipina who is a repeat migrant sex worker in Singapore; also called “timers”].* There are 25 girls in our apartment and only four bedrooms. We must work 16 hours a day; from 5 pm to 3 am. The manager gives cash to one of the “timers” and we got with her in a taxi to the pub to work.”

The Indonesian participants faced similar restrictions. They were unable to move around outside of the watchful eye of their controller and, as described below (see, Health issues), were not able to communicate or associate freely with others. As “St” (17 years, Indonesian) stated, “*My papi says that if I go outside I will get arrested and enter the jail. They always watch me so I cannot go out.*” For all participants, passports and other important documents, such as air tickets, were

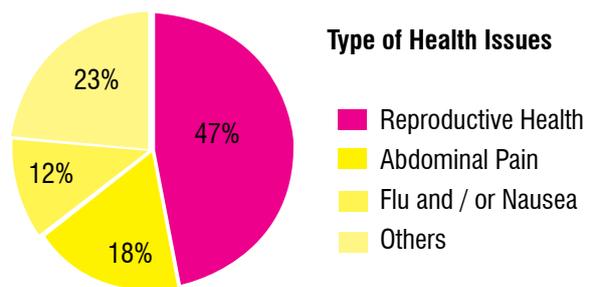
held by the boss or manager. This also acted to discourage participants from attempting to run away.

Health issues

It is commonly assumed that the major health concern for victims of trafficking for CSE is HIV/AIDS²⁵⁵. This often reflects the broader public fear of migrant workers as “vectors” of disease, which is magnified in places where migrants are deployed in the sex industry. Emerging research for other trafficking destinations and contexts in Asia has, however, begun to reveal that other sexual health concerns are often more prevalent, including vaginal bleeding and discharge, STIs other than HIV, urinary tract infections, abdominal pain and pregnancy (sometimes leading to abortions under unsafe conditions). This research has also revealed physical and psychological health concerns, such as extreme fatigue, stress and depression and physical abuse (inflicted by both clients and bosses).

The results of this research in Singapore revealed similar findings. Figure 4.5, below, shows the types of health problems experienced by the Indonesian participants (note that the figures add up to more than the number of participants, as some participants experienced more than one health problem).

FIGURE 4.5 – HEALTH ISSUES (INDONESIANS)



Filipinas did not identify sexual and reproductive health issues to the same extent as Indonesian participants. Instead, Filipinas identified the following problems:

- Physical abuse from customers or boss/controller (11 participants)
- Sexual harassment from customers or boss/controller (14 participants)
- Stress, anxiety and depression (19 participants)
- Flu and/or nausea/vomiting (six participants).

For Filipinas and Indonesian participants, their health concerns were quickly dismissed by their bosses/controllers and they were given a placebo or a mild, general pain reliever, such as paracetamol to treat virtually all ailments. Additionally, while most of the participants were provided with condoms by their bosses, none stated that they were in a position to enforce condom use with their customers. This often led to episodes of physical or verbal abuse by customers, as described by “Ar” (23 years, Filipina):

I arrive in Singapore May 27, 2009. I expect my work is waitress here. That’s why we go here. After two days in the apartment, the boss [Filipina woman] put us to work and we expect a restaurant. But instead, we are standing in front of the hotel waiting for the customers. We run away June 8, but before that I had bad experiences with customers. Our agent gets the man and makes the deal for you; SGD50 for two hours. First customer is an Indian construction worker. He wants sex without a condom and I’m scared. I fight and say no. Then he hurt me and grabbed my hands and push me. He put saliva on his penis... Then he use three fingers in my vagina and he cum and go out. My agent can’t get the money [from the customer] because I didn’t have sex with him so she’s also angry at me.

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“St” (17 years, Indonesian) also stated: *“I really dislike when the guest [client] wants me to do oral sex, but I always get forced. I sometimes puked [vomited] when I have oral sex with the Indian guest. I am always forced to do this”. While “My” (17 years, Indonesian) also stated: “I am always forced to do oral and anal sex. Sometimes I was asked to service 3 clients at one time, but I refused and I ran away from the Inn. Every time I pee [urinate] now it’s always so painful and after I have sex I see the blood coming out of my vagina – even when I don’t have period.”*

In Singapore there are three local NGOs providing direct health services to either migrant workers generally, including sex workers (Health Serve and Action for AIDS)²⁵⁶, or sex workers specifically (Student Christian Movement/Project X). None of these organisations have an awareness about trafficking, nor is it an explicit component of their agenda or mandate. Further, these organisations conduct outreach in specific locales only (primarily Geylang).

It is important to highlight that Indonesian participants (who were trafficked primarily to Geylang, the focus district

of all three migrant health NGOs) repeatedly identified that someone from a health organisation did attempt to make contact with them to distribute condoms or provide assistance for medical checks. However, the majority of these participants also stated that their controller did not allow the NGO representative to make contact with them, or that contact was closely watched by a controller. Filipina participants, who were deployed more commonly in pubs and clubs, stated that no one had attempted to provide them with information about health or health services. Further, the types of problems experienced by Filipinas and Indonesians were slightly different. Indonesian participants more commonly claimed sexual health problems, while Filipinas more commonly complained of physical abuse and harassment by customers and bosses. Future research should take note of the commonalities and differences in the health concerns of minors trafficked for CSE according to nationality and location/type of venue of deployment.

While other studies have demonstrated the importance of recognising that victims of trafficking often wish to move on with their lives, to be treated in respectful and “normal” ways and to be able to meet their livelihood needs²⁵⁷, it seems impossible for victims in Singapore to achieve any closure to their situations. At least in part because there is no avenue for compensation claims nor support for criminal justice procedures that might bring some degree of retributive justice against traffickers (see exit and post-exit trajectories, below). Although this study did not include a component that formally tracked participants after their return to their home countries, anecdotal reports (from informal exchanges between some participants and the lead researcher, information gathered by YMKK in Batam Island, information from Catholic sisters in the Philippines and information from the Bangladeshi research assistant from his research trip to Dhaka) revealed that virtually none of the participants were recognised as having been in a trafficking situation, let alone supported to move on with their lives in ways that removed the key vulnerabilities that had led to their being trafficked in the first place. Some participants returned to their home countries to remain in prostitution as “freelancers”, having never been engaged in prostitution prior to being trafficked to Singapore. Others re-entered Singapore as sex workers at a later stage.

In sum, apart from sexual health issues associated with having to provide sexual services under unsafe conditions (which appeared to be a more pressing concern for Indonesian participants), the other main health issues encountered by

participants concerned physical and verbal abuse by both bosses and customers (and sometimes police) and stress induced by the situations in which the participants found themselves in Singapore. The inability to achieve closure in their situations of exploitation can be expected to continue to have negative psychological impacts on participants, even where they have made determined efforts, through their own agency, to move on with their lives.

Customers and clients / agents and bosses

Participants in this research identified clients from the following nationalities: Chinese Singaporean, Malay Singaporeans, Indian nationals (unclear if this includes both Singaporean citizens and migrant workers), Bangladeshi migrant workers, Thai migrant workers, Filipinos (most commonly seafarers), Americans, Australians, Europeans (specifically including nationals from the United Kingdom and Germany), Japanese and Chinese. Participants identified two major concerns with clients: violence and abuse, and the explicit demand for, and deliberate and knowing use of, minors and young people in sexually exploitative situations in Singapore.

Ar's (Filipina, 23 years) and St's (Indonesian, 17 years) violent encounters with customers (described above in health issues) demonstrate one problem concerning clients. Others also recounted negative experiences with clients who were violent, abusive and/or refused to practice safe sex. The other major issue articulated by participants concerned the attitude of clients towards them, specifically, the request for, and deliberate and knowing use of, minors and young people exploited in prostitution in Singapore. Several issues are raised here including: the dismissal by clients of pleas by participants that they were being forced, or did not want this type of job; the use of participant's bodies in ways that were degrading to them; and the deflection of pleas by participants for clients to help them to leave their situations of exploitation (either by providing the phone number of a foreign embassy or support organisation, or by directly taking them out of their situations). Although a few of the Filipinas did state that when they informed clients (always Filipino clients) that they were being forced, the clients did not continue the transactions, these were the exceptions. "De's" (17 years, Indonesian) experience highlights some of these concerns. De became pregnant by a client in Singapore and gave birth to her baby daughter in April this year in Batam Island.

When the mami took me to the hotel when we arrived in Singapore there were two Malay guys already waiting there for us. These guys were clients and they force me to do sex acts in front of the camera. After this I realise I am tricked to be a prostitute in Singapore. The mami took me around from hotel to hotel. I don't even know where to go or how to talk to anyone so I don't try to run. I'm very afraid that if I talk to anyone I will be put in jail.

Sometimes the customers are two or three at one time and the mami waits for me in the bathroom in the hotel room while I service the clients. Usually I have five clients in a day or sometimes more... Nearly all of the clients ask me to do acts like in the dirty films [pornography] and if I say I don't like that they kick me and hit me. Some clients ask me why I don't know how to do it [sex]. And so I say because I am forced and I don't know how to do this job... I ask to use the condom but most of the clients refuse that too. The customers demand that I do it [intercourse] anyway because they pay for my time and so I have to do without the condom. If I say anything about refusing, the customer scolds me and so does my friend.

Interviewer: Who are your customers?

De: They are all Singaporean men; Chinese and Malay.

Interviewer: How were you "advertised" to clients by your friend? Do you know?

De: My friend marketed me as a new thing (barang bahru, or new goods). The friend tells the customers that I am under 18 years old and that is why the customers chose me.

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In addition to the issues concerning clients and customers, several participants stated that they were also subject to sexual harassment by male bosses and agents. "St" (17 years, Indonesian), for example, stated: "I was 17-years-old when I first had sex and that was with "Ba", my agent in Kijang. He raped me before he took me to Singapore to be a sex worker."

4.6 Exit and post-exit trajectories

There were four ways in which participants in this study left their trafficking for CSE situations in Singapore. 1) They simply finished their "contracts" and returned to their home countries (or occasionally a third country); 2) they were "rescued" and/or assisted in their exit by an NGO outreach

worker or similar CSO personnel; 3) they escaped using their own independent agency and volition; or 4) they were picked up during a police raid and subsequently detained or similar.

Forty-one Indonesian participants returned to Batam Island undetected. The remaining seven were caught by the police during a raid or inspection and were subsequently deported²⁵⁸. The vast majority of the undetected participants remained in prostitution, including those who had never been sex workers prior to being trafficked to Singapore. Of the Filipina participants, 11 escaped without assistance, four escaped with assistance and four were picked up in a police raid (and subsequently presented to the Philippines Embassy). It should be noted that there is a bias in these results since the means by which the participants were met – through an NGO or foreign embassy in Singapore – was related to specific ways in which they exited their trafficking situations.

Note that none of the participants reported exiting through the active cooperation and/or intervention of the police or immigration authorities. The reason for this is simple: government authorities do not work in cooperation with CSOs and NGOs (or foreign embassies) to investigate venues where there may be trafficked persons. Nor do they screen “prostitutes” picked up in raids for trafficking or other related crimes (such as debt bondage or prostituting a minor). Obviously the two elements of active intervention to provide assistance should work in concert. It should also be noted that ICA agents are not absent from the areas where trafficked persons are deployed in Singapore’s sex and entertainment sector; nine Indonesian participants and five Filipina participants reported being harassed or questioned by the police at some point during their sojourns.

Singaporean law does not provide for assistance to trafficking victims or witnesses. “J” (Filipina, 19 years), illustrates the dilemma that many victims find themselves in when picked up by the police:

I know about the credit to come here. I must pay SGD1300 before I can get salary, but it's hard because each drink the girl only get's SGD5 and SGD5 goes to the bar. My agent told me I could make a lot of money, but it's not. I was very scared when the police picked me up. I don't have a permit because my boss not give, and so I am working illegally. The police took my passport and gave me this pass. I chop one month, one month like that. There are four girls like that; the

rest they send back to the Philippines. We ask the police where are we going to stay? Singapore is so expensive and we are not allowed to work [under the conditions of the pass]. The police didn't provide us with the contact of the [Philippines] Embassy. We contact kabayan [other Filipina/ Filipino nationals] and ask to stay their house – one night here, one night there.

A related scenario was reported in the online media resource, Asia One (2009)²⁵⁹, concerning a Chinese national, “Mary”, who was trafficked to a bar in Geylang. Part of this story, relating to police treatment, is quoted here:

She told the Chinese daily that on the night of 22 January, her boss demanded from her the money that she owed. Lying, she said she would pay him the next day. Instead, she and her friend, a fellow singer at the lounge, decided to run away. They then rented an apartment in Geylang. However, while out in the area on Feb 1, her friend was spotted by the boss and caught. Mary ended up being captured as well. She said: “We called the police immediately”. When the police arrived the two of them were brought to the police station. They were released on bail after two days. To their dismay their boss was waiting for them outside the station. He claimed he was the one who helped them get out. Immediately he demanded money from them. She eventually handed over \$400, while her friend gave him \$600. Five days later Mary requested to be allowed to return to China. However, he refused and gave her a beating instead. The violent attack left her with a cut on her ear and bruises around her eyes.... After suffering the violent beating, Mary claims he took from her \$600 and 500 yuan (SGD110). Thereafter, he had a change of heart and allowed her to return to her country, even driving her to the airport.

This scenario raises a number of concerns about police treatment of foreign nationals who request assistance in major prostitution areas in Singapore, including:

1. The lack of questioning about the conditions of deployment and work the foreign nationals experience;
2. The detention of such nationals (and release “on bail”), which implies their criminality; and
3. The release of such women straight back into the hands of their traffickers/exploiters.

Apart from the issue of police and immigration treatment, investigations and prosecutions also require further

attention. Currently, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, Singaporean trafficking cases are dealt with under other legal provisions. However, there is evidence that the application of these laws does not adequately reflect the severity of the crime. The following case of a Filipina, “Chat” (18 years old at the time she was trafficked to Singapore), exemplifies this concern: Chat was recruited to work in Singapore as a waitress when she was 17 years old. By the time her documents were processed, she had turned 18. When she arrived in Singapore she was forced to provide sexual services to customers near People’s Park, and was accommodated in a hotel on Teck Lim Road with several other Filipinas until she returned to the Philippines before her one month SVP was due to expire²⁶⁰. She discovered that she had become pregnant by one of the customers, but suffered a miscarriage in the Philippines. Chat’s recruiter in the Philippines was a Filipina, Janette Ovedi, who was prosecuted under the Singaporean Penal Code for offences relating to the deployment of a minor in prostitution. For this she received a three month sentence. Upon her release, she returned to the Philippines and, with the assistance of ECPAT Philippines and Chat, she was met at Manila international airport by the Philippines National Police Agency, arrested and subsequently convicted under the Philippines anti-human trafficking law. She received a life sentence, and has currently served one year of that sentence for her involvement in a trafficking syndicate that deployed minors and young people into situations of CSE in Singapore (key informant interview, representative of ECPAT Philippines, 29 April 2010). Effectively, the Philippines anti-trafficking law broke the key actor in this trafficking ring, while the punitive action this woman received in Singapore would have had no long term effect on her ability to operate as a recruiter/trafficker.

4.7 Information on other nationalities

Information was gathered for this study concerning other nationalities as well, however, due to constraints of time, budget and issues of access, more in-depth field level research was not undertaken. This section details some of the findings pertaining to these other nationalities, which relate to the broader picture of trafficking for CSE of children and young people in Singapore.

Thai/Lao nationals

Thai women and female minors are present in Singapore’s sex industry, primarily in brothels in major prostitution districts, and in the infamous “jungle brothels” (also referred to as “forest brothels”) that appear in the nature reserve and park areas of Singapore²⁶¹, often in close proximity to dormitories of migrant workers. During the fieldwork period of this study, various media reports revealed that some of those picked up in police raids in these areas were female minors/young people, and some claimed to have been trafficked to Singapore. The females making the claims were apparently quickly deported to Thailand²⁶².

A key informant interview²⁶³ with the Alliance Anti-Traffic (AAT), a Bangkok-based NGO, yielded information relating to two cases. The first case pertained to a 14-year-old Laotian girl, named “Nu”, who was residing in the Tha-Bo district of Nong-Kai province in Thailand. She was “recruited” there by a male agent (Thai national) for prostitution in Malaysia and Singapore. This agent invited Nu on a trip to Hat Yai, Songkhla province, in southern Thailand as a tourist. In Hat Yai, Nu was given a fake passport with the Thai name, Kankana Kongsombat, on it. Then she was lured by the agent to Malaysia on the pretext of a holiday and was sold into prostitution in Johor Bahru. From there she was taken to Singapore and re-sold into prostitution²⁶⁴. The second case involved 14-year-old “Ma”, a Thai national. Ma’s case presented many similarities to Nu’s case in terms of the manner of recruitment and *modus operandi*. Ma was lured from her home in Khon Khen by a “friend” to go to Hat Yai on holiday. She left without the knowledge of her mother and, in July 2005, was reported missing. In July 2006, she contacted her mother from Malaysia and said she wanted to return home. However she was subsequently moved to Singapore by a Malaysian man and again sold into prostitution. After unsuccessful attempts to buy her freedom, Ma finally escaped from the brothel with the assistance of a friend. She returned to Malaysia where the Thai police assisted in coordinating her return to an NGO in Hat Yai (the Friend of Women Foundation (FWF)). When Ma arrived at FWF she was recorded as having serious physical health concerns, including cuts around her arms (possible suicide attempts) and needle marks on her shoulders (possible intravenous drug use), as well as signs of mental trauma (her initial interviews indicated she was in a confused and anxious state).

The Foundation for Women in Bangkok reported the case of a 16-year-old girl from northeast Thailand who was trafficked by an agent (a woman) who was living in the same village as her. This agent moved her to Singapore for CSE in March 2004. The agent told the girl that she would take her to Bangkok to work as a domestic, for an annual income of TB100,000 (SGD4250). Once in Bangkok, the agent lied to the girl, telling her that she had to make a trip to Hat Yai, and asking the girl to accompany her. Once there, the woman passed the girl over to another Thai woman who took her directly to the Golden Mile complex in Singapore by road coach. At the Golden Mile complex the girl was sold directly to a shop owner who confiscated her passport and told her she had a debt of SGD5000 that she would have to repay through sexual labour. In order to clear the debt she had to service 270 clients in one of the 'jungle brothels' mentioned above. She remained in the jungle brothel for six months until the "debt" was fully paid and then sought the help of a Thai client/boyfriend to escape. She lived with the boyfriend for two months, however, because the boyfriend was returning to Thailand she could not return with him as her visa had long since expired. She then sought the assistance of the Thai Embassy in Singapore and was eventually reunited with her family through the support of the Foundation for Women.

Information gained from other Thai women interviewed for a related study by the lead researcher has revealed that Thai women deployed in jungle brothels in Singapore are often required to service up to 100 clients for free, in order to pay off their migration debt, before they are able to make any money. Some women and girls who knowingly enter Singapore for sex work often expect the conditions (including remuneration) under which "work" is to be performed to be better than those encountered in the jungle brothels²⁶⁵.

According to another key informant, Hat Yai is the major transit point for recruiting and moving women and girls from GMS countries to Malaysia and Singapore for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. This would include Laotians such as Nu, Burmese, Vietnamese and Cambodians, as well as Thais such as Ma. Similarly, Johor Bahru functions as a major transit and destination point for trafficked and voluntary prostitutes, a destination for Malaysian and Singaporean sex tourists and a base of operations for Singaporean human smugglers and traffickers²⁶⁶.

Chinese nationals

Apart from Indonesians, Chinese nationals are likely the largest group of migrant sex workers in Singapore, including those who are minors and young people. All five participants in this study stated that they sought out a labour broker/agency to facilitate their migration to Singapore, each of whom exacted an exorbitant fee (in the highest case SGD10,000). When the participants arrived in Singapore, they discovered there was no job waiting for them in the promised sector (usually the service sector or office work). One participant, "Li" (approximately 32 years), had her work permit cancelled and she filed a case with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) to try to recover the fee she paid to the labour broker. The MOM officer issued her an S-Pass while her case was being investigated. With no money and no recourse for finding a job under the conditions of the S-Pass, Li turned to prostitution to survive (see post-exit trajectories, above). Three of the other participants came together and were promised jobs as entertainers/singers in a mode of recruitment similar to that common to the Filipinas.

All five participants stated that they were not sure of the ages of other Chinese nationals working in prostitution in the same areas as them in Singapore, but did observe "girls who were much younger than themselves". On 21 February 2009, the Straits Times reported on a Singaporean man, 55 years of age, who had been convicted of child sex offences for having paid for sex with a "17-year-old Chinese prostitute". He was one of two men convicted on such charges in 2009. The newspaper story failed to elucidate any details about what happened to this "underage Chinese prostitute", (including details about how she was recruited into prostitution in Singapore) who, by definition would constitute a victim of trafficking.

Vietnamese nationals

Very little information on the CSE of Vietnamese minors in Singapore was collected through the field research. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that Vietnamese women and minors are both deployed in Singapore's sex industry. Some are voluntary and others are deceived. In 2009 the Vietnam Net Bridge reported on the interception of nine Vietnamese female minors at Ho Chi Minh City International Airport. Their traffickers were arrested while attempting to move the girls to Singapore. According to this report, the syndicate recruited girls and young women from villages in the Mekong River Delta area with promises of "waitressing

work with an extremely high salary”, but the victims were instead sold to brothels in the Joo Chiat and Geylang areas. A separate report appeared in the Thanh Nien News, also in 2009, which included information relating to the deployment of Vietnamese minors in prostitution in Singapore.

Bangladeshi and Indian nationals

An interview with a 25-year-old Indian woman, “Sa”, was conducted by the lead researcher in June 2009 for a related study on trafficking of adult women into Singapore. According to information from this interview, many Indian nationals enter Singapore with the assistance of travel or labour recruitment agencies in India. These agencies arrange a passport and other documentation, and offer promises of work in the service sector, as domestics or in other professions. A common mode of deployment of Indian nationals in Singapore’s sex industry can be gleaned from Sa’s narrative:

Someone told me about opportunities to go abroad to Singapore with a salary of SGD3000 per month, or INR1 and a half Lakh. This is an international job consultancy agency. I decided to go by myself so I can save on the commission. I went to a travel agent with a woman who was put in touch by the job consulting agency. The travel agent charged me INR30,000 (SGD924) for visa and return ticket and this woman travelled with me to Singapore. I have a feeling the travel agent and job consulting agent have some kind of arrangement together. The travel agent gave me show money and when we arrived in Singapore some man collected it from me at the airport. We did not go to the address on the immigration card. The woman took me to Geylang instead and she put me to stay in a hotel. In the taxi going to Geylang the taxi driver was telling me that Geylang is not a good place and there are lots of prostitutes there. The woman is trying to stop the taxi driver from talking to me, even though she doesn’t speak English well. When we arrive she talked to two other Indian girls about me and asked them if they have space in their room for me to stay [at Hotel 81, Geylang]. I am in a room with three other girls and all of them are overstayers [meaning they have remained in Singapore beyond the term given on their visa]. There are 11 of us Indian girls altogether and at least half of them are not even 18-years-old. All the girls are southern Indians, from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, except for me from Andhra Pradesh. The woman who travelled with me wouldn’t

let me go to the Internet café to search for a job. She was staying together with us in the room in the hotel and after two days she said to me, “It’s very easy to make money from your body in Singapore instead of getting another job”. I was very disappointed not to find an IT [information technology] job, which was my work in India. I had no choice but to follow this woman. There are other people in Geylang who are watching me at that time and they don’t let me talk to outsiders.

Interviewer: What about the other girls you were staying with? Were they in the same situation?

Sa: Yes, of course. Only a few of them came to Singapore thinking they will sell the sex. The rest, it’s just like me. Also, we all have to pay for the room in Hotel 81, which is SGD50 per day between us. How can I pay that without income?

A 2008 newspaper report by the Hindustan Times exposed a racket involving a maid placement agency that operated across many of India’s poorer northern states. It lured Indian nationals to Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur) and Singapore under the ruse of jobs as paid domestic workers, only to end up being deployed in night clubs. This, and Sa’s case, illustrate the deceptive recruitment that prevails in the case of Indian nationals trafficked to Singapore²⁶⁷. Similarly, in 2009 the New Paper reported on the case of “Rani”, a 27-year-old Indian woman who was recruited by an acquaintance in India who told Rani she could arrange a job for her as a maid in Singapore with a salary of SGD310 per month²⁶⁸.

Five Bangladeshis were interviewed in Dhaka for this study, after they had returned from Singapore. None of these participants had intended to migrate to Singapore for any form of prostitution, and all had migrated with the assistance of a labour broker or recruitment agency (as in the case of Sa from India, discussed above), including one participant who was raped by the labour agent on the first night that she arrived. Other sex workers in Dhaka were also interviewed to obtain an understanding of the various conditions and modes under which other women and girls may have entered Singapore for sex work.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Findings from this research project highlight the fact that like other developed countries in the world, despite having high social and economic indicators and a child protection system in place, Singapore is confronted with the problem of trafficking of children and young people for sexual purposes and other forms of child sexual exploitation.

Understanding sex trafficking in Singapore: the main challenges

The field level research carried out here provides clear evidence that sex trafficking victims in Singapore include women, children and young people (the latter between 18 to 21 years and considered “minors,” according to Singapore legislation on child prostitution) originating from several countries in the region.

According to this study, victims’ characteristics, patterns of exploitation and *modus operandi* of traffickers are similar to those identified in many other countries in Asia and worldwide. Information gathered from interviews with Filipinas and Indonesians show that, despite most victims

having graduated high school, their situations in their home countries were rendered difficult by a number of factors (including the need to care for family members, a lack of employment opportunities, financial difficulties consequent to some crisis event or sexual abuse within the family setting). In the case of Indonesians, an additional factor that increased the vulnerability of children and young people to trafficking for sexual exploitation to Singapore was their prior involvement in prostitution or internal sex trafficking within Indonesia.

A variety of recruitment methods were exposed by the field level research. These ranged from offers of work in Singapore as a waitress or in prostitution (but with high levels of deceit about the conditions attached to the work), to offers of holiday travel to Singapore for sightseeing and shopping. A common element to all nationalities concerned is that recruiters always engaged in a trusted relationship with victims. Agents were generally a person known to the victim (such as a friend or relative) or referred to by a person known to the victim.

While all participants apparently entered Singapore on a legal visa, in the case of some minors, forged passports were also used (the date of birth was usually changed so that the minor appeared to be an adult). In many cases, once in Singapore, women, children and youth were exploited in various locations - from brothels, bars and clubs, to hotels and “forest brothels” located in the nature reserve and park areas of Singapore, often in close proximity to dormitories of migrant workers. Debt bondage was used as a mechanism to force them to engage in prostitution and remain in their exploitative situations.

The field level research has also presented interesting preliminary findings on trafficking networks and exploiters which need to be further analysed and specifically addressed. While the level of organisation of traffickers varies, in-depth interviews with victims confirm that trafficking operations are usually run by criminals (at least two people involved) that collaborate to take women, children and young people from their homes, to locations where there is a demand for them. Reflecting a global trend, traffickers often come from the same ethnic and national background as the women, children and young people they recruit into sex trafficking. The involvement of women as perpetrators (as recruiters

but also as “organisers”) is also common. With regard to demand, the field level research has ascertained that some men explicitly seek sex with children and young people and make deliberate and knowing use of minors for sexual gratification, despite the fact that this behaviour is punishable by imprisonment under Singaporean legislation.

The presence of sex trafficking in Singapore requires that targeted and integrated measures are adopted to reduce the vulnerability of potential victims; ensure prosecution of procurers, traffickers and others involved; and ensure adequate protection, care and assistance for victims. Unfortunately, only limited progress has been made in this direction to date.

As pointed out by the research, the Government has not yet acknowledged the existence of sex trafficking, especially child trafficking for sexual purposes, and has focused its anti-trafficking efforts mainly on strengthening the legal framework. Apart from a paucity of child-focused preventive actions in Singapore and countries of origin, a big concern raised by victims and other stakeholders interviewed for the study is the ineffective support available for trafficked victims. Without a screening system to identify trafficked victims, in particular child victims among vulnerable populations (such as people deployed in the commercial sex industry and illegal migrants), and without specific training, law enforcers continue to raid, punish, detain and deport trafficked victims, leaving them highly vulnerable to further trauma and abuse. For most of the cases analysed, exit from prostitution through the active cooperation and/or intervention of the police or immigration authorities was absent. Equally, cooperation between governmental authorities, CSOs and NGOs (or foreign embassies) to investigate venues where there could be trafficked persons was limited to a couple of committed embassies. The capacity of NGOs to identify and deal with trafficked victims was also deemed to be generally low. While some organisations conduct outreach work in certain areas and provide health services to migrant workers and persons in prostitution, none of them have sufficient awareness and expertise about human trafficking, including child sex trafficking specifically.

Effective law enforcement is further hampered by the lack in Singaporean law of any measure to support and protect victims of trafficking who assist the authorities

in investigating cases, as well as by the absence of a mechanism for claiming compensation. In this context, no alternatives and opportunities appear to be available for trafficked victims to rebuild their lives. Although the field level research did not include a component that formally tracked participants after their return to their home countries, anecdotal reports suggest that some victims re-enter Singapore’s commercial sex sector after deportation, or end up in prostitution in their home countries. More should therefore be done to ensure that victims are not re-trafficked, including enhancing cooperation with countries of origin on investigation, prosecution and victim repatriation.

Major concerns related to other forms of child sexual exploitation affecting Singapore

The desktop review, which preceded the field level research, has shown that, apart from child sex trafficking Singapore is affected by other manifestations of CSEC, which require more attention. Although there is no reliable data on its scope and dimension, a number of sources have pointed to an increasing number of Singaporean boys and girls engaging in child prostitution in the form of “enjo-kosai” (a Japanese term for compensated ‘dating’, which generally involves the provision of sex for remuneration, such as for cash or for consumer goods), as well as to a disturbing phenomenon of child sexual exploitation connected to misuse of the Internet and other ICTs (resulting in online grooming for online and offline exploitation, exposure to inappropriate materials and “sexting”). At the same time, the desktop review confirmed that increased mobility in travel and tourism has provided some Singaporean citizens with more opportunities to engage in sex with children during their trips abroad (especially in Indonesia and the Philippines).

Although some efforts have been made (especially to ensure a safer Internet environment and to counteract child pornography through engagement of the private sector), a number of challenges identified by the desktop review still need solutions. Singapore has not yet designed and implemented a comprehensive national plan of action addressing the complex and multi-dimensional nature of commercial sexual exploitation of children, nor has it established a child protection coordinating agency to bring all stakeholders together in a coherent and integrated framework for action. Push factors behind enjo-kosai and online sexual

exploitation of children remain inadequately investigated, with the result that specific measures to reduce children's vulnerability to these violations have not yet been developed. Very few initiatives have focused on counteracting and preventing child sex tourism. No collaboration has been identified with destination countries for Singaporean travelling child sex abusers to ensure their prosecution, nor has the Singaporean tourism industry been involved in any corporate social responsibility strategy. Activities to raise public awareness on the different manifestations of CSEC seem lacking, while the demand for sex with children has been only partially addressed through sensitisation campaigns promoted mainly by international organisations. As for addressing child sexual exploitation, some progress was noted with regard to the legal framework (particularly the introduction of punishment for sexual grooming and extraterritorial legislation), but some loopholes still need to be closed. Identification and assistance of child victims of trafficking and pornography remains problematic and, while support services for sexually abused children exist and are provided through a holistic approach, they are not tailored to the specific needs of child victims of sexual exploitation and are not delivered by fully specialised social workers.

All of these findings highlight the need for the Government of Singapore and other concerned stakeholders (including children's organisations, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector and children and young people themselves) to initiate actions and improve current strategies and policies to strengthen protection of children from sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations. These recommendations are aimed at improving current strategies and policies to strengthen protection of children from sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations and would most likely be phased and implemented under a multi-year approach. Furthermore, it is hoped that these interim recommendations will provide a useful and constructive basis for close consultation among all key stakeholders in Singapore, in order that final recommendations may be prepared for an action plan to address trafficking of children and young people for sexual purposes in Singapore.

Recommendations

Cross-cutting issues

- **The Singapore Government should adopt a national plan of action (NPA) on child protection** to include targeted measures against sex trafficking and other CSEC manifestations. The plan should incorporate comprehensive measures, with adequate monitoring and evaluation, targeted resources and designated responsible actors. The plan should bring together all relevant key stakeholders - not only government agencies, but also international organisations, civil society organisations, the private sector, financial institutes and children and young people who are familiar with the issues of children's rights and sexual exploitation of children.
- In conjunction with the NPA development, **a dedicated inter-ministerial child protection agency should be set up**. It should have permanent staff and broad representation from various stakeholders, including the public sector, academia, community groups, parents and educators. As part of its broader mandate, this agency should take a leading role in studying, formulating and implementing national strategies on CSEC (including in the framework of the NPA), and coordinate activities and resources across the various government agencies and other key stakeholders. Examples of good practices implemented through NPAs in other countries to increase the protection of children include:
 - Free hotlines where consultations or services and information on child sex trafficking can be accessed by the public and, specifically, children and young people;
 - Training of border patrol officials and relevant law enforcement officials on child trafficking, especially on screening for child victims of human trafficking; and
 - Safe houses or shelters established in high risk locations where vulnerable children and young people can be protected and initial services can be provided.
- To enhance assistance to children and address the demand for sex with children, while also strengthening the knowledge base on CSEC, **data collection systems on victims and perpetrators should be developed, implemented and shared among relevant law enforcement and social service agencies** in accordance with applicable laws and with respect for confidentiality.
- Singapore may also **consider establishing an independent human rights commission or a specific ombudsman for children and youth**. In compliance with the Paris Principles, such an institution should be independent and provided with financial resources and specialised personnel. It should be able to receive complaints on children's rights violations, including

CSEC cases, directly from children.

- **Embassies/consulates of countries of origin of trafficked victims represented in Singapore need to establish a point of contact and designate their own liaison officer** to deal with human trafficking cases and suspected trafficked victims to ensure the appropriate provision of initial support services to victims during their stay in the destination countries, and appropriate repatriation to their home countries.
- **The roles, functions and responsibilities of embassies/consulates of countries of origin represented in Singapore** and other relevant law enforcement agencies, social services and NGOs need to be clearly defined and established to increase effective responses to cross-border trafficked victims and investigation processes.
- **More in-depth research is required on all forms of sexual exploitation of children (below 18) in Singapore, as well as on sex trafficking of women, children and young people.** Aspects that need further analysis include: the extent of the phenomena; the structure and level of organisation of organised crime; the potential link between sex trafficking, labour trafficking and mail-order brides; victim profiles and vulnerability factors (especially in relation to child prostitution and online sexual exploitation of children); the demand that fuels all forms of CSEC (including the potential involvement of children and youth as sex offenders) and factors pushing perpetrators to seek sex with children; the sexual exploitation of boys (especially through prostitution and misuse of the Internet and other ICTs) and specific measures to address it; and the possibility that Singapore is both a sending and receiving country for child sex tourism.

Priority actions required to address sex trafficking

1. Preventing women, children and young people from being trafficked and exploited in Singapore

- Human trafficking is widely recognised as a global issue that requires not only collaboration of key stakeholders within the country but also bi-lateral/multi-lateral collaboration across countries in order to effectively tackle the problem. In this regard, Singapore (as a destination country for sex trafficking of women and girls) needs to extend collaboration and partnership with origin countries of victims trafficked to Singapore for sexual purposes. The aim of this collaboration and partnership is to support the

origin countries to increase their interventions that will equip the vulnerable population groups, including children, with knowledge and skills that enable them to legally and safely migrate to work and contribute to Singaporean society.

- Relevant government agencies, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should also conduct and host sensitisation campaigns targeting the general public in Singapore to inform them about the existence of sex trafficking in Singapore, including trafficking of children for sexual purposes. Additionally, clients of persons in prostitution should be made aware of the implications of child sex trafficking and should be informed that having commercial sex with children is a criminal offence under national law. Awareness-raising campaigns to deter the demand for sex with children need to be sustained.
- Interception of trafficking victims at the borders must be improved. For example, border control personnel should be trained to be more receptive to the signals of women, children and young people being trafficked for sexual exploitation. This is even more important where there is relatively open movement of people (as is the case for nationals of ASEAN countries and citizens from the People's Republic of China). Police and border guards should initiate strategies to protect presumptive victims and improve follow-up of suspected cases.
- Cooperation between police, border guard personnel and ferry lines, airlines and other transport companies should also be initiated and improved. Informational materials about these modes of transport can be developed and shared. These materials should include information for victims of child sex trafficking about how and where they can go for help in Singapore. Brochures should also include brief information in the languages of potential victims (including child-friendly language) about laws and related matters, such as availability of and accessibility to legal and social services. The brochures should also explain to potential victims that such services can be accessed without fear of being reported and charged as illegal migrants.

2. Fostering cooperation at the national, regional and international levels

- Cooperation between governmental authorities, CSOs, NGOs and foreign embassies should be enhanced to ensure prompt investigation of potential sex trafficking cases, especially the immediate referral of child victims and the provision of adequate protection and assistance.
- Based on the successful experience of many Asian countries (such as those in the Greater Mekong Sub-region), Singapore should initiate bilateral agreements with countries of origin of child sex trafficking victims (especially Indonesia, China, the Philippines and Thailand). These agreements should be used to foster collaboration on investigation and prosecution of human trafficking, as well as repatriation of victims, with a view toward preventing re-trafficking. As the procedures required to protect children who have been trafficked are different from those developed for adults, it seems appropriate for bilateral agreements to contain provisions which specifically focus on children's rights and needs, rather than relying on general provisions that apply to both adults and children.
- As a member state of ASEAN, Singapore should make all possible efforts to facilitate the implementation of the work-plan to implement the ASEAN Declaration against Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children and the *ASEAN Guidelines for the Protection of the Rights of Trafficked Children in Southeast Asia*.

3. Strengthening the legal framework and law enforcement response

- Singapore's anti-trafficking legislation should also be reviewed. It should enact an anti-human trafficking law to ensure that victims are identified, receive protection, and appropriate recovery. It should also ensure that trafficked victims that participate as witnesses in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers are adequately supported and protected throughout the criminal justice process. A mechanism for claiming compensation for the abuses suffered during the trafficking experience should also be established.

- Efforts to identify trafficking victims, especially child victims, among vulnerable groups such as women, children and young people arrested for pimping and public solicitation, or as undocumented migrants, need to be enhanced to avoid the problem of victims of trafficking being punished, deported, re-traumatised and/or neglected. Moreover, funds need to be allocated to provide specialised training of law enforcement officials, prosecutors, judges, social workers and other relevant officials to better understand children's rights and proper implementation of child-friendly legal procedures. Such training will help to ensure children's rights to protection and increase convictions and prosecutions for child sex trafficking offenses.
- Singapore should ratify both the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*. In the meantime, Singapore should review its legal framework to protect children to ensure national laws are in line with the international standards, particularly in amending the definition of child trafficking so that all acts constituting child trafficking are punished regardless of the final exploitation.

4. Ensuring care and assistance for sex trafficked victims

- In line with the *ASEAN Guidelines for the Protection of the Rights of Trafficked Children in Southeast Asia*, it is essential that trafficked children receive specialised assistance at every step, from detection to social reintegration and/or repatriation. Child victims should be entitled to: placement in dedicated shelters designed exclusively for children; education or vocational training and job opportunities (appropriate to the victim's age); specialised health services; appropriate counselling and psycho-social services; and legal assistance. Child victims should also be afforded an appropriate immigration status, including the right to get a temporary or permanent stay permit for humanitarian reasons, regardless of whether they collaborate in the justice process.
- To ensure that women, children and young people trafficked for sexual purposes receive effective protection and assistance, a referral mechanism

capable of handling human trafficking cases should be established. This implies a clear division of responsibilities between the different agencies involved (both government agencies and NGOs) and collaboration at the operational level, which can be fostered through multi-stakeholder training.

- The Singaporean government, in collaboration with NGOs, should establish one-stop drop-in centres to help make contact with victims and vulnerable women, children and young people by offering a non-threatening opportunity for them to connect with agencies offering assistance and a route to protection.
- The Singaporean Government and NGOs should also consider establishing telephone helplines or hotlines to be used as an independent source of information, advice and guidance for women, children and young migrants. Hotlines can act as the first point of contact for trafficking victims, as well as a tool for anonymous reporting of cases of sex trafficking.

Priority actions required to address other forms of sexual exploitation of children identified in Singapore

1. Preventive measures

- Targeted measures should be developed to reduce the risk that children are enticed into prostitution, especially in the form of *enjo-kosai* and in the alarming new forms of online child sexual exploitation (such as exchanging inappropriate pictures of themselves for money or other forms of remuneration). This might include working with the media and marketing companies to minimise social pressures on young people to buy consumer goods and address the pervasive problem of sexualisation of children (especially in advertisements), which has contributed to a distorted view of sexuality among young people and to a culture where children are increasingly seen as sexual objects available for exploitation.
- Singapore should evaluate the national education and information programmes already implemented to promote safer use of the Internet and new ICTs and ensure that deficiencies identified are duly addressed. Considering that children are the main actors in and recipients of these measures, such an evaluation should be supported by children's participation, building on their understanding,

knowledge and expertise. Measures should also be initiated, designed and implemented with children to ensure the use of strategies that meet their needs and better protect them in relation to the new technologies.

- Awareness-raising initiatives, including media education, on all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children must become part of every school curriculum. Sex education topics must be broad, covering issues such as respectful sexual relationships, self-integrity, perceptions of sexuality, group behaviour and group-induced pressure. Education should target students (with consideration given to age-appropriateness) and training for teachers will need to be provided to ensure that children receive effective sex education.
- Websites offering chat rooms and/or social networking online that are specifically aimed at children and young people should implement effective age checks and provide a mechanism for infringing users to be banned. Chat rooms should be equipped with panic buttons and reporting systems for children and young people who feel threatened or uncomfortable. This would contribute to a safer Internet environment for children and would act as a deterrent for offenders.
- Considering that filters are still useful for protecting younger children who are not yet mature enough to fend for themselves, the present, optional FAN service provided by all ISPs should be better publicised and made accessible for free to Singaporean households.
- Sustained campaigns and other information activities to discourage Singaporeans from going abroad to sexually exploit children should be implemented. The principle of extraterritoriality, which was recently introduced into law, should be adequately publicised.
- The Singaporean tourism industry should play a key role in addressing child sex tourism as part of their corporate social responsibility, with the support of relevant government agencies. In this framework, tourism companies should adopt and implement the *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Exploitation in Travel and Tourism* and promote the concept of social responsibility among their business partners and employees.

2. International cooperation

- Singapore needs to enhance cooperation with destination countries for Singaporean travelling child sex abusers to institutionalise procedures for reporting, investigating and prosecuting child sex tourism committed overseas by Singaporean citizens and permanent residents. Singapore should also share information on the movements of child sex offenders and suspected offenders with its counterparts abroad and help destination countries to monitor tourists and long-stay visitors who may pose a risk to local children.
- Singapore should also contribute to the Interpol Child Abuse Image Database and its successive versions, and strengthen police and judicial cooperation with other countries to ensure effective counteraction of child abuse materials.

3. Legal framework and law enforcement response

- Singapore legislation should be reviewed and appropriately amended in order to ensure that all children under the age of 18, both boys and girls, are fully protected from all acts related to child prostitution.
- The Government of Singapore should review its legislation addressing undesirable publications and film censorship to include a clear definition of 'child pornography'/ child abuse materials (in line with Article 2 of the Optional Protocol) which stipulates that child pornography means "any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for sexual purposes."
- A specialised police unit to investigate online sexual exploitation of children should be established and staffed with specialised personnel. Internet Service Providers should provide mechanisms for Internet users to report directly to law enforcement agencies from the online environments in which the sexual exploitation of children is experienced or detected.
- Child-friendly procedures during investigation and judicial proceedings adopted so far should be regularly used and relevant training for law enforcers on their application should be delivered. Singapore should also consider integrating the topic

of commercial sexual exploitation of children in all forms into the training curricula for police forces and the judiciary.

4. Support services for children victimised through prostitution and pornography production

- The Singaporean Government should allocate adequate resources for identifying and ensuring adequate support to children portrayed in child sexual abuse materials.
- While individualised case management based on a holistic approach should continue to be used in providing care and assistance to child victims of sexual exploitation, including prostitution, it is necessary that services are specifically tailored to meet the special needs of these children, taking into account gender differences, victims' ages and individual circumstances. The possible involvement of children (including CSEC survivors) in the recovery and reintegration processes should also be explored, as this increases the effectiveness of the responses.

ANNEX – PARTNER PROFILES



The Body Shop

The Body Shop International plc is the original, natural and ethical beauty brand, with over 2,500 stores in over 60 markets worldwide. The Body Shop seeks out wonderful natural ingredients from all four corners of the globe to deliver products bursting with effectiveness, to enhance your natural beauty. By striving to use the planet's resources wisely, The Body Shop searches for outstanding natural materials and ingredients from across the globe to include in its range of products. The Body Shop is proud to have been the first beauty brand to have brought the benefits of fair trade to the beauty industry through its own unique Community Fair Trade programme, to have introduced sustainable palm oil into its soaps, 100% recycled packaging, and to raise funds and awareness on key issues of the day, including the sex trafficking of the most vulnerable in our society, children and young people.

The Body Shop has received the recognition of organisations including the British RSPCA, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, having been proudly awarded the prestigious RSPCA 'Lifetime Achievement Award 2009', "in recognition of the significant contribution the company has made in helping to achieve a ban on animal testing and in particular the work carried out by its late founder Dame Anita Roddick". In addition, The Body Shop is pleased its products continue to win illustrious awards and accolades internationally, and the brand continues to be cited as an 'ethical' and 'green' brand. In Singapore, there are 40 The Body Shop stores nationwide.



ECPAT International

ECPAT is a global network of organisations and individuals working together to eliminate child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

The ECPAT acronym stands for 'End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes'.

ECPAT has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

Vision:

Realisation of the right of all children to live free of child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes.

Mission:

ECPAT International is a global network of organisations and individuals working together for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

ECPAT Networks:

The ECPAT network has expanded from four groups (all in Asia) prior to the World Congress in 1996 to more than 80 groups in over 75 countries by 2010. All of these groups are independent organisations or coalitions working against the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The strength of the ECPAT movement is based on its activities at local, national and international levels. These activities empower the constituents of the movement in a number of ways. The work of the national and affiliate groups at the local and national levels validates the role of the International Secretariat. At the same time, the international activities carried out and/or promoted and/or assisted by the Secretariat give strength and credibility to the individual groups. By working together, these ECPAT actors give the movement an increasing status and authority in international circles. The ECPAT movement is indeed the main player in the fight against CSEC.

ECPAT International Programme Overview:

ECPAT International works to make a reality of the Stockholm Agenda for Action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The Agenda was adopted by 122 countries at the First World Congress against CSEC in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1996.

We follow what governments are doing and have done to combat CSEC and we publish the results. We explore good models for prevention work and share those models and experiences. We find and develop training modules to help caregivers do their work better. We develop learning tools for police training curricula. We provide advice and information to groups who are trying to make a national plan for their country or implement an existing plan. We carry out research and develop research methodologies. We promote the participation of young people in seeking solutions to the problems and in providing support to victims.

The tools and information that are produced throughout the ECPAT programmes which are available free to download at: www.ecpat.net are intended to help non-governmental organisations, individuals, caregivers, legislators and all those who are trying to combat child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

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UNIFEM Singapore

The National Committee for UNIFEM Singapore (UNIFEM Singapore) is a non-profit organisation working towards women's empowerment and gender equality in developing countries.

Established in 1999, the organisation functions as a National Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), headquartered in New York.

We support programmes that provide women and children with access to education, healthcare, economic independence and a life free of violence and abuse

Mission:

We support the general mission of UNIFEM in developing nations throughout the region by providing funds and support for:

- Economic Empowerment Programmes - to enable women to develop business and entrepreneurial skills to access local, national and global markets. Projects also assist women in gaining access to finance, technology and information.
- Governance and Leadership Programmes – to give women a voice and visibility by encouraging their leadership in decision making processes that shape their lives.
- Conflict Area Programmes - to provide services for women violated during war and armed conflict. These projects also promote the role of women in peace building.
- UNIFEM Trust Fund - to support actions to eliminate violence against women, including projects in the areas of: HIV/AIDS, female infanticide, trafficking, forced prostitution, domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape.

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H.O.M.E.

The Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (H.O.M.E.) was registered in Singapore as a society under the Societies Act on 6th September 2004 to respond to the special needs of migrant communities. The following year, the society was accepted as a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and registered as a charity under the Charities Act of Singapore. Since 2005, H.O.M.E. has been granted Institute of Public Character (IPC) status.

There are some 900,000 migrant workers in Singapore and H.O.M.E. has provided direct assistance to more than 60,000 migrants and victims of human trafficking and forced labour as well as migrants affected by the 2004 tsunami disaster

and the current global economic crisis.

Mission and Objectives:

H.O.M.E. is committed to the principle that the migration of people benefits the global society, with a focus on the effects of migration within the context of Singapore. The objectives of H.O.M.E. are:

- To develop research and education on the socio-economic impact of migration on Singapore and the countries of origin
- To provide social integration services for immigrants
- To provide humanitarian assistance to migrants who are affected by crisis in their home countries

Programmes and Services:

H.O.M.E. works with government agencies, civic groups, corporations and other community partners to realise its vision and mission through the following programmes and services:

Advocacy

- Legal assistance to migrant workers who have experienced injustice and highlighting these cases to the authorities (Ministry of Manpower/Police/Immigration)
- Public education on issues affecting migrant workers
- Dialogue sessions with policy makers, authorities and stakeholders

Welfare

- Provision of shelter and food to destitute and displaced migrant workers
- Free medical and dental treatment services
- Recreational activities / enrichment workshops that build mental, psychological and spiritual well-being

Empowerment

- Vocational skills training such as IT, language courses and caregiver training
- Human rights and paralegal workshops for migrant workers

Strategic Partners:

Government Agencies

H.O.M.E. works with the Ministry of Manpower, the Singapore Police Force, Immigration Checkpoint Authority and foreign embassies in Singapore to protect migrant victims of trafficking and exploitation.

Non- Governmental Agencies

H.O.M.E. collaborates with TWC2 (Transient Workers Count Too), UNIFEM (Singapore Chapter), NTUC and AWARE (Association of Women for Action & Research) on campaigns and research-based advocacy. Within the region, H.O.M.E. is a member organisation of Migrant Forum in Asia and Caram Asia. H.O.M.E.'s cross-border partner in the Philippines and Indonesia is Solidaritas Migran Scalabrini (SMS), which serves victim migrants returning from H.O.M.E. shelters.

Business / Corporate Partners/ Educational Institutions
Corporations such as Microsoft, The Body Shop, Western Union and educational institutions, such as United World College, have supported H.O.M.E. in projects leading to its growth and development. H.O.M.E. also works with pro bono legal and medical professionals, such as Allen & Gledhill, HOH Law Corporation, Hui Clinic and Wong Surgery.

Awards:

In 2004, the Founder President, Ms Bridget Lew Tan received the Banaag Award from the President of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, for her service to Filipinos in Singapore. In 2005, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for the 1,000 Peace Women project. In 2006, she was elected Group Coordinator for the Lay Scalabrinian Missionary Movement for Asia Pacific. In 2007, on the birthday of the Thai King, she received an Award of Appreciation from the Thai Embassy for the work of H.O.M.E.

Who's who in the HOME team:

H.O.M.E. is managed by the President and the Board of Management. The Board, comprising 10 elected members, appoints a seven-member team to execute the mission of the society in "Building a Culture of Welcome where No Man, Woman or Child is a Stranger. We are One Family".

President Bridget Lew Tan	Vice President Natalia Goh	Secretary Chan Hui Min
Treasurer Christianto	Executive Director Jolovan Wham	

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specific names of prostitution establishments, hotels, recruitment agencies/ recruiters, etc. in this report.

²⁴⁴ The research assistants included an Indonesian, NGO manager, working on issues related to prostitution/trafficking and based on Batam Island; a graduate student in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore who is also involved in volunteer outreach work with persons in prostitution in Geylang; and a Bangladeshi reporter based in Singapore.

²⁴⁵ A separate report by the lead researcher is to be published this year detailing the specific experiences of adult women (both older and younger) trafficked for CSE to Singapore.

²⁴⁶ In Chapter 5 it is recommended that a separate study be commissioned for these groups since it is likely the *modus operandi* related to their trafficking will be different from those focused on in this report. These differences are important when designing effective interventions for victim support and criminal justice responses.

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²⁴⁹ As the fieldwork for this study was nearing completion, the research team in Batam Island received information about a case of three Indonesian minors from Java who were recruited and sent to Batam Island in transit for Singapore. The three girls were hidden under guard in a private house in Happy Valley housing estate when one of the three managed to escape and run to the police. The police subsequently raided the house, rescued the other two minors and, in the process, uncovered a syndicate involving Indonesian and Singaporean nationals. The case is currently under investigation by the Indonesian police.

²⁵⁰ Further information, including a discussion of contributing factors in the trafficking process, is available from the Philippines Embassy's Information Sheet on Human Trafficking of Filipino Women into Singapore. This document can be requested from the Philippines Embassy directly. The 2010 report, which relates to 2009, is currently being prepared.

²⁵¹ Most of the background information concerning the deployment of Indonesians in the Singapore sex industry was provided by staff at YMKK NGO on Batam Island.

²⁵² In addition to debts incurred to finance migration costs (eg, make-up, clothes, health checks, airport tax, etc.), many participants had pre-existing debts in their home countries, usually to informal money-lenders. These other debts are not discussed in detail in this report. Although these debts contributed to vulnerability to trafficking, we are more interested in attending to the debts accrued while in Singapore. These debts acted more directly to force participants into performing sex services under various unsafe conditions.

²⁵³ For some Indonesian participants the debt was difficult to repay in only one sojourn in Singapore because the period of stay granted them in the SVP was less than they had expected, making it difficult to see enough customers to fulfil their debt obligations.

²⁵⁴ The one exception to this were a group of Filipina participants who said that their boss handed over their passports during their working hours so that if they were picked up by the police they would not be suspicious. Outside of working hours, these women were not allowed to retain their passports.

²⁵⁵ Beyrer, C. & Stachowiak, J. Health Consequences of Trafficking of Women and Girls in Southeast Asia. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 10(1), Summer/Fall 2003, p. 13. Accessed on 10 June 2010 from: <http://www.watsoninstitute.org/bjwa/archive/10.1/SexTrafficking/Beyrer.pdf> (relating to the health consequences of trafficking of women and girls in southeast Asia, namely the direct health consequences of commercial sex, threats to mental health and difficulties relating to health care access).

²⁵⁶ Action for AIDS's mandate is not limited to AIDS. Their activities are fully described on their website: <http://www.afa.org.sg/home.php>. Similarly, Health Serve primarily serves the health needs of migrant workers, but also is involved in supporting the health needs of marginalised Singaporeans. See their website for further details: <http://www.healthserve.org.sg/>.

²⁵⁷ Lisborg, Anders & Plambech, Sine. *Going Back Moving On: A synthesis report of the trends and experiences of returned trafficking victims in Thailand and the Philippines*. ILO. 2009.

²⁵⁸ Although none of the Indonesian participants escaped or were rescued, one of the key informants interviewed stated that they encountered an Indonesian minor in 2008 wandering around at the harbour front ferry terminal. It transpired that she had managed to evade her mami and was seeking to return to Batam Island. The same key informant has assisted other Indonesian minors (most recently, in November 2009, she assisted a 14-year-old girl from Kalimantan), whom she has met through outreach work in Geylang, and supported their repatriation to Batam Island, from which they would eventually return to their home provinces.

²⁵⁹ They came here to sing, but some forced to be prostitutes. Accessed in April 2010 from: <http://www.asiaone.com/print/News/The%2BNew%2BPaper/Story/A1Story20090210-120902.html>

²⁶⁰ In her statements to the police and her case information, as provided to ECPAT Philippines, Chat stated that many of the other Filipinas in the hotel on Teck Lim Road were minors.

²⁶¹ Wong-Anan, Nopporn. Thais say suffered in Singapore "jungle brothel". Reuters, 24 April 2009. Accessed on 10 June 2010 from: <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-39222920090424>; Armstrong, David. Sexual Slavery tolerated in decent Singapore. *Bangkok Post*, 28 May 2009. Accessed on 19 August 2009 from: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/17453/sexual-slavery-tolerated-in-decent-singapore>.

²⁶² Although the Thai Embassy in Singapore chose not to cooperate in this study, it should be noted that they assist women and girls who have been caught by the police for soliciting in Singapore. Interestingly, the Thai Embassy has a dedicated fund to assist with the repatriation of Thai nationals who are suspected victims of trafficking. According to a Thai government official (key informant discussion, 10 December 2009, Bangkok), no victim of trafficking from Singapore has been reported to have availed themselves of this fund.

²⁶³ The interview took place on 17 December 2009.

²⁶⁴ AAT assisted this girl to return to her family in Laos. AAT also collaborated with the International Justice Mission to arrest the Thai agent who initially trafficked Nu.

²⁶⁵ See also, Thais imprisoned in Singaporean jungle brothel. Reuters, 24 April 2009.

²⁶⁶ Batam Island, Indonesia has received an extraordinary amount of academic and media attention as a major destination for Singaporean and Malaysian sex tourists, and as a transit point for Indonesian migrant workers attempting to migrate to Singapore and Malaysia. Johor Bahru, Malaysia, by comparison, has been almost completely neglected, despite considerable evidence of human trafficking and sex tourism activities in the city. See, for example, Alkhatib,

Shafiq. Suspected human smuggling syndicate leader to be handed over to Singapore. Channel News Asia, 26 March 2010. Accessed on 19 April 2010 from: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1046051/1/.html>; Singaporean human smuggler held. The Straits Times, 10 February 2010. According to this second article, 37 foreigners were rescued (including 30 Vietnamese, two of whom were male minors) in Johor Bahru. A key informant interview with a representative from the Centre against International Human Trafficking, Attorney General's Office, Thailand (interviewed 21 December 2009) also provided information to the effect that Thai minors (two cases) were trafficked to Johor Bahru between February and April 2005, and came to the attention of Thai police when they were presented at the local police station in Hat Yai.

²⁶⁷ In this particular newspaper article, the maid placement agency was registered in Singapore as Abel and Joe Agency. A Singaporean national acted as the main "recruiter" of Indians for this particular agency. See India asks Singapore to curb trafficking racket. Hindustan Times, 10 October 2008.

²⁶⁸ AsiaOne (a Singapore Press Holdings Portal). They came here to sing, but some forced to be prostitutes, 9 February 2009.

²⁶⁹ From: <http://www.asiaone.com/print/News/AsiaOne%2BNews/Singapore/Story/A1Story20090209-120670.html>. Accessed: May 2010 'enjo kosai' is a Japanese term referring to a 'compensated dating' by using 'deai kei' websites: through which they can make their contact details available, and use pagers, computers and mobile phones (the most common method) to arrange 'dates' with customers who are older and often married. (source: Global Monitoring Report on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children: Japan, ECPAT International, 2006. Bangkok)

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