

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN SINGAPORE: A GLOBAL STUDIES APPROACH

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guided by our research question “*How and in what ways has the state failed to protect all vulnerable women facing intimate partner violence (IPV)?*”, this task force seeks to develop a global studies approach, that is interdisciplinary in nature, to tackle this complex and global social issue. Fundamentally, we argue that even though the state has provided *de jure state* (in law) protection to victims of IPV, there are still *de facto* (in practice) protection gaps in place for women. Through an interdisciplinary analysis--refracted through the social lens, the political lens, and the public health lens-- we found that unmarried women in dating, cohabiting, or same-sex relationships, as well as sex workers are particularly left unprotected from IPV. While there are workarounds in the system for them to seek help and protection from IPV, those avenues are grossly limited and are laden with barriers as compared to those for legally married, heterosexual individuals. To narrow the state’s protection gaps of women facing IPV in Singapore, then, we propose various policy recommendations. Using the Remedial-Preventive-Developmental (RPD) model of social intervention, our recommendations are aimed at bolstering intervention at all three levels:

### *Remedial Policy Recommendations*

#### Protractive Changes

- Reworking PPO and the Magistrate’s Complaint through Legislative Changes
  - Make Personal Protection Orders (PPO) more accessible to unmarried women
  - Reduce barriers for unmarried women to pursue the Magistrate’s Complaint

#### Immediate Changes

- Sensitivity Training for Singapore Police Force (SPF)
  - Implement a compulsory sensitivity training for all police officers to better sensitise them when dealing with IPV cases
  - Provide police officers with the authority to arrest perpetrators of IPV without a warrant and equip them with the knowledge and skills to transport victim-survivors of IPV to crisis shelters
- Sensitivity Training for MOE Educators
  - Implement a compulsory sensitivity training for all MOE educators in their NIE curriculum to equip them with the skills and empathy to respond to victim-survivors of IPV
- Improvements to Health Support Services
  - Provide first-line support training for healthcare professionals, especially at the pre-qualification stage, in order to prepare them for future cases of IPV that they might have to deal with
  - Offer gender-inclusive sensitivity training for healthcare providers so that they will more attuned to address the concerns of LGBTQ victim-survivors of IPV
  - Design and launch a healthcare service application that links up LGBTQ victim-survivors of IPV to trained healthcare providers
- Violence Prevention Centres
  - Set up Intimate-Partner Violence Prevention Centres in all tertiary institutions in order to increase the accessibility of specialized support services for students facing IPV

### *Preventive Policy Recommendations*

#### Protractive Changes

- Devise and implement a National Action Plan to eliminate Violence Against Women (VAW)
  - Outline provisions for a sustainable approach to tackling IPV in Singapore
  - Collect and make available data on the prevalence of gender-based violence including IPV
- Inclusion of IPV in Sex Education
  - Provide a sustainable approach to raising awareness about dating and intimate-partner violence among youths in Singapore by incorporating this topic in MOE's Sexuality and Health Education syllabus

#### Immediate Changes

- Police Involvement in Schools for Public Education
  - Engage the Singapore Police Force to educate secondary and tertiary students on dating violence
  - Build trust so that students will be more willing to seek the help of the police when they face IPV
- Resources for Foreign Wives at Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA)
  - Publish and issue out language-inclusive resources on IPV (causes, signs, support services) to foreign wives to ensure that they are aware of their rights in Singapore

### *Developmental Policy Recommendations*

#### Protractive Changes

- Reworking IPV in Legislation
  - Redefine what constitutes a 'family' in the Women's Charter and other legislations to afford more protection for unmarried women facing IPV
  - Either re-conceptualize IPV and separate it from legislative definitions of family to ensure that unmarried women have access to PPO,
  - Or remove IPV from the Women's Charter entirely to enhance state protection for all who are facing IPV, including those with marginalized sexual identities
- Changing Cultural Attitudes
  - Normalize marginalized sexualities by increasing their representation in the media

#### Immediate Changes

- Changing Cultural Attitudes
  - Incorporate discussions on harmful gender roles and stereotypes in MOE's Sexuality Education Syllabus
  - Launch school-based awareness campaigns that will educate students on the how harmful gender roles and stereotypes can lead to IPV
  - Set up an incubation center for students who want to lead projects that tackle the root cause of IPV
- Leveraging on Online Media
  - Circulate progressive and inclusive public education materials on social media and online sites
  - Develop a one-stop online resource bank that people can turn to should they require any information on IPV