

## **Housing affordability key to good parenting**

Published on Oct 25, 2011

GOOD parenting is one of the most important factors in helping children level up and become good citizens ('PM's goal: No one gets left behind'; last Friday). But the high cost of HDB housing necessitates mothers to work.

In 1981, I earned \$800 plus as a fresh graduate. At that time, one of my colleagues bought a five-room HDB flat for \$35,000. Now, graduates' pay has risen about four times but HDB flat prices have risen more than 11 times.

Though we were not well off in the 1960s, me and my four siblings had our mother at home providing a loving and peaceful home environment. Now, with high HDB prices, women are forced to work to help pay the mortgage.

Not every family can afford a maid to ease the burden when the mother is working. So many lower-income children are left to fend for themselves after school. Without maids, working mothers from the lower-income group have domestic chores to do after work and the quality of parenting suffers.

Even for those who can afford maids, what kind of children are being raised by successive maids without any adult supervision at home? I have observed that many children raised solely by maids - alone at home - grow up to be teenagers who are self-centred, pampered and dependent.

Many children nowadays do not enjoy the kind of home environment where a mother is present most of the time to motivate and guide them. As such, it is no wonder that many Singapore women are reluctant to have more children.

Our working mothers are highly stressed with long working hours and multiple roles. The sharp rise in HDB prices over the last 20 years has had an adverse impact on our fertility rate too.

So I appeal to the Government to do more to help mothers work part-time or work from home - or better still, become stay-at-home mothers.

Make HDB housing affordable based on one parent's salary.

Cheryl Lee (Madam)  
A stay-at-home mum and  
part-time businesswoman