

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 802

AN ACT

To authorize the Secretary of State and the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development to provide assistance to support the rights of women and girls in developing countries, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Girls Count Act of
3 2015”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress makes the following findings:

6 (1) According to the United States Census Bu-
7 reau’s 2013 international figures, 1 person in 12, or
8 close to 900,000,000 people, is a girl or young
9 woman age 10 through 24.

10 (2) The Census Bureau’s data also illustrates
11 that young people are the fastest growing segment
12 of the population in developing countries.

13 (3) Even though most countries do have birth
14 registration laws, four out of ten babies born in
15 2012 were not registered worldwide. Moreover, an
16 estimated 36 percent of children under the age of
17 five worldwide (about 230,000,000 children) do not
18 possess a birth certificate.

19 (4) A nationally recognized proof of birth sys-
20 tem is important to determining a child’s citizenship,
21 nationality, place of birth, parentage, and age. With-
22 out such a system, a passport, driver’s license, or
23 other identification card is difficult to obtain. The
24 lack of such documentation can prevent girls and
25 women from officially participating in and benefit-

1 ting from the formal economic, legal, and political
2 sectors in their countries.

3 (5) The lack of birth registration among girls
4 worldwide is particularly concerning as it can exacer-
5 bate the disproportionate vulnerability of women to
6 trafficking, child marriage, and lack of access to
7 health and education services.

8 (6) A lack of birth registration among women
9 and girls can also aggravate what, in many places,
10 amounts to an already reduced ability to seek em-
11 ployment, participate in civil society, or purchase or
12 inherit land and other assets.

13 (7) Girls undertake much of the domestic labor
14 needed for poor families to survive: carrying water,
15 harvesting crops, tending livestock, caring for young-
16 er children, and doing chores.

17 (8) Accurate assessments of access to edu-
18 cation, poverty levels, and overall census activities
19 are hampered by the lack of official information on
20 women and girls. Without this rudimentary informa-
21 tion, assessments of foreign assistance and domestic
22 social welfare programs are difficult to gauge.

23 (9) To help ensure that women and girls are
24 considered in United States foreign assistance poli-
25 cies and programs, that their needs are addressed in

1 the design, implementation, and evaluation of for-
2 eign assistance programs, and that women and girls
3 have the opportunity to succeed, it is important that
4 girls be counted and have access to birth certificates
5 and other official documentation.

6 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

7 It is the policy of the United States to—

8 (1) encourage countries to support the rule of
9 law and ensure girls and boys of all ages are able
10 to fully participate in society, including by providing
11 birth certifications and other official documentation;

12 (2) enhance training and capacity-building in
13 key developing countries, local nongovernmental or-
14 ganizations, and other civil society organizations, in-
15 cluding faith-based organizations and organizations
16 representing children and families in the design, im-
17 plementation, and monitoring of programs under
18 this Act, to effectively address the needs of birth
19 registries in countries where girls are systematically
20 undercounted; and

21 (3) incorporate into the design, implementation,
22 and evaluation of policies and programs measures to
23 evaluate the impact that such policies and programs
24 have on girls.

1 **SEC. 4. UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT COUNT-**
2 **ING OF GIRLS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.**

3 (a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The Secretary and the Admin-
4 istrator are authorized to prioritize and advance ongoing
5 efforts to—

6 (1) support programs that will contribute to im-
7 proved and sustainable Civil Registration and Vital
8 Statistics Systems (CRVS) with a focus on birth
9 registration;

10 (2) support programs that build the capacity of
11 developing countries' national and local legal and
12 policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against
13 girls in gaining access to birth certificates, particu-
14 larly where this may help prevent exploitation, vio-
15 lence, and other abuse; and

16 (3) support programs and key ministries, in-
17 cluding, interior, youth, and education ministries, to
18 help increase property rights, social security, home
19 ownership, land tenure security, inheritance rights,
20 access to education, and economic and entrepre-
21 neurial opportunities, particularly for women and
22 girls.

23 (b) **COORDINATION WITH MULTILATERAL ORGANI-**
24 **ZATIONS.**—The Secretary and the Administrator are au-
25 thorized to coordinate with the World Bank, relevant
26 United Nations agencies and programs, and other relevant

1 organizations to encourage and work with countries to
2 enact, implement, and enforce laws that specifically collect
3 data on girls and establish registration programs to ensure
4 girls are appropriately counted and have the opportunity
5 to be active participants in the social, legal, and political
6 sectors of society in their countries.

7 (c) COORDINATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND
8 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary and the
9 Administrator are authorized to work with the United
10 States, international, and local private sector and civil so-
11 ciety organizations to advocate for the registration and
12 documentation of all girls and boys in developing coun-
13 tries, in order to help prevent exploitation, violence, and
14 other abuses and to help provide economic and social op-
15 portunities.

16 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

17 The Secretary and the Administrator shall include in
18 relevant evaluations and reports to Congress the following
19 information:

20 (1) To the extent practicable, a breakdown of
21 United States foreign assistance beneficiaries by age,
22 gender, marital status, location, and school enroll-
23 ment status.

24 (2) A description, as appropriate, of how
25 United States foreign assistance benefits girls.

1 (3) Specific information, as appropriate, on pro-
2 grams that address the particular needs of girls.

3 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

4 In this Act:

5 (1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Adminis-
6 trator” means the Administrator of the United
7 States Agency for International Development.

8 (2) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.—The term “foreign
9 assistance” has the meaning given the term in sec-
10 tion 634(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
11 (22 U.S.C. 2394(b)).

12 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
13 the Secretary of State.

14 **SEC. 7. SUNSET.**

15 This Act shall expire on the date that is five years
16 after the date of the enactment of this Act.

 Passed the Senate May 23 (legislative day, May 22),
2015.

Attest:

Secretary.

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