

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 3398

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

NOVEMBER 20, 2014

Received; read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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 2014”.

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—
8 or close to 900,000,000 people—is a girl or young
9 woman age 10 through 24.

10 (2) The data also asserts that young people are
11 the fastest growing segment of the population in de-
12 veloping countries.

13 (3) Even though most countries do have birth
14 registration laws, nearly one-third of all children
15 under the age of 5 worldwide have never had their
16 births registered. Moreover, an estimated 45 percent
17 of children under the age of 5 worldwide (about 290
18 million children) do not possess a birth certificate.

19 (4) A nationally recognized proof of birth is the
20 key to determining a child’s citizenship, nationality,
21 place of birth, parentage and age, without which a
22 passport, drivers license, or national identification
23 card are impossible to obtain. Those who lack such
24 documentation are often prevented from officially
25 participating in and benefitting from the formal eco-
26 nomic, legal, and political sectors in their countries.

1 (5) The lack of birth registration among girls
2 worldwide is particularly concerning as it exacer-
3 bates their disproportionate vulnerability to traf-
4 ficking, child marriage, and lack of access to health
5 and education services.

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

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

15 (8) Accurate assessments of access to edu-
16 cation, poverty levels, and overall census activities
17 are hampered by the lack of official information on
18 women and girls. Without this rudimentary informa-
19 tion, assessments of foreign assistance and domestic
20 social welfare programs cannot be accurately
21 gauged.

22 (9) To ensure that women and girls are fully in-
23 tegrated into United States foreign assistance poli-
24 cies and programs, that the specific needs of girls
25 are, to the maximum extent possible, addressed in

1 the design, implementation, and evaluation of devel-
2 opment assistance programs, and that women and
3 girls have the power to affect the decisions that af-
4 fect their lives, all girls should be counted and have
5 access to birth certificates and other official docu-
6 mentation.

7 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

8 It is the policy of the United States to—

9 (1) encourage countries to uphold the Universal
10 Declaration of Human Rights and enact laws that
11 ensure girls and boys of all ages are full participants
12 in society, including requiring birth certifications
13 and some type of national identity card to ensure
14 that all citizens, including girls, are counted;

15 (2) enhance training and capacity-building to
16 developing countries, local nongovernmental organi-
17 zations, and other civil society organizations to effec-
18 tively address the needs of birth registries in coun-
19 tries where girls are undercounted;

20 (3) include organizations representing children
21 and families in the design, implementation, and
22 monitoring of programs under this Act; and

23 (4) mainstream into the design, implementa-
24 tion, and evaluation of policies and programs at all

1 levels an understanding of the distinctive impact
2 that such policies and programs may have on girls.

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

5 (a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary and the Admin-
6 istrator are authorized to—

7 (1) support programs that will contribute to im-
8 proved and sustainable Civil Registration and Vital
9 Statistics Systems (CRVS) with a focus on birth
10 registration as the first and most important life
11 event to be registered;

12 (2) promote programs that build the capacity of
13 developing countries' national and local legal and
14 policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against
15 girls;

16 (3) support programs to help increase property
17 rights, social security, and home ownership, land
18 tenure security, and inheritance rights for women;
19 and

20 (4) assist key ministries in the governments of
21 developing countries, including health, interior,
22 youth, and education ministries, to ensure that girls
23 from poor households obtain equitable access to so-
24 cial programs.

1 (b) COORDINATION WITH MULTILATERAL ORGANI-
2 ZATIONS.—The Secretary shall coordinate with the World
3 Bank, relevant United Nations agencies and programs,
4 and other relevant organizations to urge and work with
5 countries to enact, implement, and enforce laws that spe-
6 cifically collect data on girls and establish registration and
7 identification laws to ensure girls are active participants
8 in the social, economic, legal and political sectors of society
9 in their countries.

10 (c) COORDINATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND
11 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary and the
12 Administrator should work with United States, inter-
13 national, and local private sector and civil society organi-
14 zations to advocate for the registration and documentation
15 of all girls and boys in developing countries to prevent ex-
16 ploitation, violence, and other abuses.

17 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

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

21 (1) To the extent practicable, United States
22 foreign assistance and development assistance bene-
23 ficiaries by age, gender, marital status, location, and
24 school enrollment status.

1 (2) A description of how United States foreign
2 assistance and development assistance benefits girls.

3 (3) Specific information on programs that ad-
4 dress the particular needs of girls.

5 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

6 In this Act:

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

10 (2) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.—The term “foreign
11 assistance” has the meaning given the term in sec-
12 tion 634(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
13 (22 U.S.C. 2394(b)).

14 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
15 the Secretary of State.

16 **SEC. 7. SUNSET.**

17 This Act shall expire on the date that is 5 years after
18 the date of the enactment of this Act.

Passed the House of Representatives November 19,
2014.

Attest:

KAREN L. HAAS,

Clerk.