

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2100

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.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 29, 2015

Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Ms. MCCOLLUM, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. ROYCE, and Mr. ENGEL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Girls Count Act of
5 2015”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

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

5 (2) The Census Bureau’s data also asserts that
6 young people are the fastest growing segment of the
7 population in developing countries.

8 (3) Even though most countries do have birth
9 registration laws, four out of ten babies born in
10 2012 were not registered worldwide. Moreover, an
11 estimated 36 percent of children under the age of
12 five worldwide (about 230 million children) do not
13 possess a birth certificate.

14 (4) A nationally recognized proof of birth sys-
15 tem is important to determining a child’s citizenship,
16 nationality, place of birth, parentage, and age. With-
17 out such a system, a passport, driver’s license, or
18 other identification card is difficult to obtain. The
19 lack of such documentation can prevent girls and
20 women from officially participating in and benefit-
21 ting from the formal economic, legal, and political
22 sectors in their countries.

23 (5) The lack of birth registration among girls
24 worldwide is particularly concerning as it can exacer-
25 bate the disproportionate vulnerability of women to

1 trafficking, child marriage, and lack of access to
2 health and education services.

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

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

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

18 (9) To help ensure that women and girls are
19 considered in United States foreign assistance poli-
20 cies and programs, that their needs are addressed in
21 the design, implementation, and evaluation of for-
22 eign assistance programs, and that women and girls
23 have the opportunity to succeed, it is important that
24 girls be counted and have access to birth certificates
25 and other official documentation.

1 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

2 It is the policy of the United States to—

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

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

16 (3) incorporate into the design, implementation,
17 and evaluation of policies and programs measures to
18 evaluate the impact that such policies and programs
19 have on girls.

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

22 (a) **AUTHORIZATION.**—The Secretary and the Admin-
23 istrator are authorized to prioritize and advance ongoing
24 efforts to—

25 (1) support programs that will contribute to im-
26 proved and sustainable Civil Registration and Vital

1 Statistics Systems (CRVS) with a focus on birth
2 registration;

3 (2) support programs that build the capacity of
4 developing countries' national and local legal and
5 policy frameworks to prevent discrimination against
6 girls in gaining access to birth certificates, particu-
7 larly where this may help prevent exploitation, vio-
8 lence, and other abuse; and

9 (3) support programs and key ministries, in-
10 cluding programs and ministries relating to interior,
11 youth, and education, to help increase property
12 rights, social security, home ownership, land tenure
13 security, inheritance rights, access to education, and
14 economic and entrepreneurial opportunities, particu-
15 larly for women and girls.

16 (b) COORDINATION WITH MULTILATERAL ORGANI-
17 ZATIONS.—The Secretary and the Administrator are au-
18 thorized to coordinate with the World Bank, relevant
19 United Nations agencies and programs, and other relevant
20 organizations to encourage and work with countries to
21 enact, implement, and enforce laws that specifically collect
22 data on girls and establish registration programs to ensure
23 girls are appropriately counted and have the opportunity
24 to be active participants in the social, legal, and political
25 sectors of society in their countries.

1 (c) COORDINATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR AND
2 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS.—The Secretary and the
3 Administrator are authorized to work with the United
4 States, international, and local private sector and civil so-
5 ciety organizations, including faith-based organizations, to
6 advocate for the registration and documentation of all
7 girls and boys in developing countries, in order to help
8 prevent exploitation, violence, and other abuses and to
9 help provide economic and social opportunities.

10 **SEC. 5. REPORT.**

11 The Secretary and the Administrator shall include in
12 relevant evaluations and reports to Congress the following
13 information:

14 (1) To the extent practicable, a breakdown of
15 United States foreign assistance beneficiaries by age,
16 gender, marital status, location, and school enroll-
17 ment status.

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

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

22 **SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.**

23 In this Act:

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

4 (2) FOREIGN ASSISTANCE.—The term “foreign
5 assistance” has the meaning given the term in sec-
6 tion 634(b) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961
7 (22 U.S.C. 2394(b)).

8 (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
9 the Secretary of State.

10 **SEC. 7. SUNSET.**

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

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