

114TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. 802

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.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 19, 2015

Mr. RUBIO (for himself and Mrs. SHAHEEN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## 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, or  
3           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 illustrates  
6           that young people are the fastest growing segment  
7           of the 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 230,000,000 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 organizations representing children and fam-  
11 ilies in the design, implementation, and monitoring  
12 of programs under this Act, to effectively address  
13 the needs of birth registries in countries where girls  
14 are systematically undercounted; and

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

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

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

24 (1) support programs that will contribute to im-  
25 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;

7 (3) support programs to help increase property  
8 rights, social security, home ownership, land tenure  
9 security, and inheritance rights, particularly for  
10 women; and

11 (4) assist key ministries in the governments of  
12 key developing countries, including health, interior,  
13 youth, and education ministries, to ensure that girls  
14 and boys from poor households have equitable access  
15 to social programs.

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 to advocate for the registration and  
6 documentation of all girls and boys in developing coun-  
7 tries, in order to help prevent exploitation, violence, and  
8 other abuses and to help provide economic and social op-  
9 portunities.

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 five years  
12           after the date of the enactment of this Act.

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