

SUMMARY

Before the passage of the Girls Count Act, millions of children around the world were essentially invisible in the eyes of the law. According to UNICEF, in 2012, four out of 10 births were not registered. This lack of proper birth registration left girls particularly vulnerable to human trafficking as well as being left out of vital social systems. By signing this bill into law on June 12, 2015, the U.S. Congress and President Obama have made it a top U.S. foreign policy priority that all girls (and boys) born in developing countries receive birth certificates and other documentation.

PROCESS

ADVOCACY STEPS

HEAR ABOUT ISSUE

Human trafficking has been a priority of CRS and the international community. Lack of birth registration has been directly linked to an increased vulnerability and higher risk of becoming a victim of trafficking, particularly for young girls. The Girls Count Act was presented to the 113th Congress but failed to pass in 2014.

RESEARCH ISSUE

Organizations, such as a CRS and many others, had significant information regarding the root causes and consequences of human trafficking, and drew on this history in order to educate themselves and the general public about the importance of birth registration.

FORM ACTION PLAN

CRS and other groups focused on this act knew that the participation of individual citizens (like you!) was essential. They encouraged everyday citizens to write, call, or visit their congressional representatives and provided information about why this action was so important.

TAKE ADVOCACY ACTION

Citizens wrote, called and e-mailed in droves—and Congress listened!

SUCCESS!

The 114th Congress passed the Girls Count Act, and President Obama signed it into law on June 12, 2015! While every advocacy action that you take may not have such an immediate impact, every time you engage in advocacy you are making a difference!

Discussion Questions

1. The first time that the Girls Count Act was presented before Congress, it failed to pass; however, the organizations, politicians, and individuals who felt passionately about this issue worked even harder to ensure that it passed the next year. Not every advocacy action results in immediate change: what are some ways that you can stay encouraged to fight for an issue that you feel passionately about? How can you present your issue differently in order to inspire greater support?
2. Part of the reason that advocacy efforts for the Girls Count Act were so successful was because many different organizations (especially the Catholic Church), politicians, and individuals came together for the same cause. When thinking about issues that you care about, what different groups already exist in your school, church, or community that could come together in support of a common issue? What about on a national level? An international level?