

SOCIAL APPLICATIONS OF GENETIC IDENTIFICATION: FIGHTING CHILDREN TRAFFICKING

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Human trafficking and human exploitation are becoming one of the main criminal problems and it is slowly becoming the most important crime in economical terms. There are different ways to fight this crime, but one of them has a scientific, criminalistic approach.

The University of Granada (Spain) started in 2006 the so called DNA-PROKIDS Program, now under development in collaboration with the University of North Texas Health Sciences Center. We're supported by the Spanish Government and with donations from different foundations: Life Technologies, BBVA, Santander, DC Zogbi & CajaGranada.

Since 2009 we have helped and supported up to 16 countries from Latin America and Asia to generate two independent databases that are automatically compared each other every time a new profile is entered. The first database or Reference Database (RD) is composed of DNA profiles obtained from voluntarily donated biological samples (buccal swabs) from mothers and other family members of missing kids. The second database or Questioned Database (QD) is composed of DNA profiles obtained from kids that have been found without their families, or that are being exploited or known as victims of human trafficking.

These databases are owned by the different countries. Data are therefore used to identify missing children inside a given country, but can be also shared with other countries in case of international cases of trafficking or cases of illegal adoptions.

From the University of Granada and the University of North Texas Health Sciences Center we are giving different kinds of support, depending on the country. First, we're sending to all of them "DNA collection kits", including all necessary tools to collect either buccal cells or bloodstains, along with cards to write the data of the donor after informed consent. Second and in some cases, we are performing DNA analysis to samples shipped to our facilities; all samples are handled anonymously, identified just with a bar-code and a set of numbers and letters. Third, we're travelling to visit different countries support them to get started. Fourth and last, we're giving training and support to different experts.

To the date, over 9.500 samples have been collected in the different participating countries, and over 600 positive identifications have been made, including relevant cases in Guatemala and Bolivia. Our results are starting to show that DNA is a helpful tool and all efforts in this area are worthing.

More data at: www.dna-prokids.org /// www.facebook.com/DNAPROKIDS