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Genetic identification against human trafficking

- Posted by [Michael de Laine](#) on 18 May 2009 at 3:01pm
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From the University of Granada, 18 May 2009

A Spanish university has announced a genetic-based international project against human trafficking and identifying missing children.

DNA-Prokids (www.dna-prokids.org), an international project aimed at preventing and fighting human trafficking using genetic identification of victims and their relatives, was officially presented today, at the University of Granada (UGR) headquarters, in Spain.

Traffic in human beings is one of the most frequent and profitable crimes at the beginning of the 21st century. According to data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), approximately two million people are victims of human trafficking across the world. UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, stated recently that “trafficking in weapons, drugs and blood diamonds has long been on the UN agenda” and that now is the time to “add people to that list”.

Upon suggestion of the UGR Genetic Identification Laboratory, an international project for genetic identification of missing children and their families was set up in 2004. The goal was to not limit the scope of research to domestic crimes, but to spread results worldwide with the aim of boosting the international fight against human trafficking.

That was the start of DNA-Prokids, an initiative which has been praised by authorities and experts in genetic identification all over the world, and whose piloting experiences in countries such as Guatemala, Mexico, Philippines and Indonesia are being extremely successful.

The head of the UGR Genetic Identification Laboratory, Professor José A. Lorente, stressed that DNA-Prokids, as a programme for genetic identification of human trafficking victims and their relatives, serves “a triple objective: to hamper traffic in human beings thanks to identification of victims; to use such identification to return victims to their families (reunification), and to gather information on the origins, the routes and the means of this crime (police intelligence), key elements for the work of police forces and judicial systems”.

To date, there is no other specific initiative aimed at missing children identification based upon systematic and automatic international cooperation through a single worldwide database. This is exactly the mission of DNA-Prokids: coordinating, from both a scientific and a legal perspective, genetic identification protocols, a goal which scientists and authorities from Brazil, China, Colombia, Dubai, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Philippines, Spain, Thailand, USA or Venezuela have already expressed interest in.

DNA-Prokids is an initiative of the UGR Genetic Identification Laboratory, in cooperation with the University of North Texas Center for Human Identification, in the USA, and with the contributions of financial institutions such as BBVA, Fundación Botín (Banco Santander) or CajaGRANADA and of Life Technologies (USA).

Next October, the southern Spanish city of Granada will host DNA-Prokids 1st International Conference: genetic identification against children trafficking. Scientists, NGOs, international bodies, representatives of security forces and experts from judicial systems will gather in this meeting with the aim of creating an international alliance against children trafficking by making the most of new genetic identification techniques.

Click [here](#) to read more about DNA-Prokids.

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