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Spanish Scientists Cooperate To Fight Against Child Trafficking In Haiti

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Spain's Secretary of State for International Cooperation, Soraya Rodríguez, has presented a new cooperation program aimed at helping the human tragedy in Haiti.

The project called DNA-Prokids in Haiti will enable to initially take 6.000 samples of genetic data from adults who have reported missing children, immediate relatives with blood relationship, and from children with no family or doubtful relatives. The aim is to deter human trafficking of children and help reunite abducted and homeless children with their parents after the devastating earthquake, a problem which UNICEF and other organizations are warning of.

The Haitian Ambassador in Spain, Yollete Azor-Charles, have thanked the Spanish authorities for the initiative and have reported that she will do the best to offer the structure and means of the Haitian Government for the project.

The program DNA-Prokids in Haiti will be developed by the Spanish Government thanks to the collaboration by the University of Granada, which has being working in DNA-Prokids since 2004, through its Laboratory of Genetic Identification. DNA - Prokids also cooperate with the University of North Texas and is supported by the Andalusian Regional Government and the Life Technologies Foundation, as well as financial institutions such as BBVA or Fundación Botín/Santander, and laboratories and authorities from American and Asian countries.

Immediate start

The collaboration offer to the Haitian Government will start immediately and is scheduled in five stages, the director of the program Dr. José A. Lorente said: "On site training on sample collection; sample collection kits distribution (saliva, blood) for children under 18 with unknown family; sample collection kits distribution (saliva, blood) for parents (or relatives, if needed) who report their children disappearance; DNA analysis of the cases and design and development of ad hoc databases; and, finally, data delivery to competent Haitian authorities. Data interchange will make family reunification possible in same cases, it will force to continue searching in other cases, but it will save the children from abuse and organized crime in all cases".

The whole process will fulfil all warranties and quality requirements in sample chain of custody and data analysis and delivery. In case the Laboratory in Granada is overwhelmed by the number of cases, other national and international laboratories are planned to make the data analysis, according to DNA -Prokids strategy.

Andalusian Regional Government, represented by the Councillor for Justice, Begoña Álvarez, and the University of Granada, represented by the Vice-rector for Development Cooperation, Miguel Gómez Oliver, have committed their institutions to develop the Project in Spain and Haiti, following the support they have already provided to DNA-Prokids.

About DNA-Prokids

DNA-PROKIDS is an international humanitarian project using DNA testing to deter human trafficking of children and help reunite abducted and homeless children with their parents. The program started in 2004 in the Legal Medicine Department of the University of Granada. In 2009 the Health Sciences Center of the University of North Texas (Center of Human Identification, USA) joined the project. DNA - Prokids is supported by financial institutions such as BBVA, Fundación Botín (Banco Santander) and CajaGRANADA. Collaboration with the UNT, a 500000 USD grant



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from the Life Technologies Foundation, and cooperation with laboratories and authorities from other countries helped the Project to increase its activity during last year (Philippines, Thailand, Mexico or Guatemala, among others), which enable DNA-Prokids with Haiti to be developed with best warranties.

Source:
Antonio Marín



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