While rape victims wait ...

A decade after SA created one of the most important laboratory infrastructures in the world, the politicians have still failed to give police the legal authority to save literally thousands upon thousands of lives with DNA.

What’s the hold-up?

Why is SA not implementing the necessary legislation?

We asked Dr Carolyn Rancoc, a flowich-based director of the DNA Project

"In South Africa, the use of DNA as an unimpeachable test. The Criminal Procedure Act, which was promulgated in 1977 before DNA was even used, only mentions the presumption that deals with the ascertainment of identity features from an accused. South Africa, therefore, does not have specific legislation that allows for the expansion and regularisation of our National Criminal Intelligence DNA Database. Consequently, the Criminal Procedure Act is inadequate and slavishly drafted and adopted by cabinet in November 2008. As yet there has been no specific DNA legislation introduced to Parliament for review or debate."

The committee decided that they needed to embark on an overview task team to identify legislation that would not only contain the DNA database and the use of DNA as a forensic tool but also because of the failure to act in politics in South Africa. The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee responsible for the legislation that would give police the ability immediately began taking responsibility for DNA law making. The committee is currently considering the Draft DNA Act, which was unfortunately disbanded following the election on 2 May 2009. The committee has not yet reached a decision on this.

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"The committee has been unable to come to an agreement on the issue of the DNA database and the use of DNA as a forensic tool, because of the failure to act in politics in South Africa. The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee responsible for the legislation that would give police the ability immediately began taking responsibility for DNA law making.

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Dr Carolyn Rancoc studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where she obtained a Ph.D. in genetics. After lecturing in the department of genetics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, she joined the DNA Project in 2007 and has since driven the non-profit organisation, the aim of which is to facilitate the expansion of the South African National Criminal Intelligence DNA Database. The DNA Project is committed to achieving this through the expanded use of DNA databases in connection with forensic DNA identification and low- and high-caseload crime.