

Everyone who is working for a cause should put efforts in educating and engaging the public



Jonathan Jiménez is a passionate Human Rights Lawyer and Professor of Law, who lives in Guatemala, Central America. He founded the legal organization Jiménez and Jiménez in 2019 and it provides legal solutions to victims of violence in rural communities in Guatemala. It has the mission to contribute to building a society free of violence with equal opportunities for young generations, promoting a message of peace and inclusion.

Jonathan, could you tell us more about your work?

Our work is to make a positive impact in rural indigenous communities of Guatemala by bringing visibility to vulnerable groups, giving them a voice, and ensuring access to justice. Our everyday activities include litigation for children and adolescents, providing legal guidance in cases of domestic violence, implementing mediation and arbitration techniques, advocating for the rights of minorities, and providing peacebuilding guidance.

Tell us more about local indigenous communities that you provide with legal services. What are the main challenges they face?

Guatemala is considered a developing country, as of 2021, Guatemala ranks 31st of 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries in the Human Development Index. Guatemala's past has been marked by the internal armed conflict that lasted for 34 years. Multiple acts of genocide and atrocities against indigenous peoples were committed during the internal armed conflict, which had catastrophic consequences for the country's development.

The Mayan indigenous population's major challenge is poverty and lack of education. As a country, we face other problems - weak governance, endemic corruption, pervasive poverty, food insecurity, severe violence, citizen insecurity, shrinking space for civil society, lack of respect for human rights, and inequitable access to economic opportunities and social services. Due to those social problems thousands of Guatemalan families have been forced to flee violence, becoming the 10th largest migrant group in the United States of America.

What are the economic and social measures that your country could develop that will make this situation better in your opinion?

I think that in terms of development, the Guatemalan Government must prioritize education and security as it is crucial to break the cycle of poverty and violence. It is important to provide equal opportunities to the Mayan indigenous population and this includes improving access to quality education, and promoting a space free of violence to every Guatemalan. It is also important to eradicate corruption as it is a measure that will ensure more transparent and accountable governance.

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Can you tell us a positive story related to your work – please share an achievement?

Since its foundation in 2019, Jimenez and Jimenez has been dedicated to providing legal solutions to families in need, ensuring access to justice. We have helped dozens of families that do not have access to justice. I remember a mother that suffered gender-based violence and was seeking legal protection for her and her three children. The mother had limited knowledge of her rights and found herself overwhelmed and helpless, so we empowered her to break the circle of violence. I am proud that we took immediate action against the abuser. It is just one of many examples of how justice was done.

You are also giving Law courses at Universidad Regional de Guatemala. What do you like about that part of your job? Do you think that young people are engaged with the issue of human rights? How do you engage them?

Teaching law courses to undergraduate students is my passion, above all, because I can share the best juristic and justice practices to be a community leader and lawyer who will have a positive impact on the society we live in.

Regarding young Guatemalan people's engagement with the issue of human rights, my students are aware that they can and should advocate for human rights as they play an important role in Guatemala's development.

Engaging young people in human rights issues can be done through various methods, I prefer the following: case discussion and research human right topics in Guatemala can actively involve them in the human rights field as I encourage their participation in proposing solutions. Inviting guest speakers and encouraging critical thinking is also important.

Can you share some best practices in terms of advocacy in the field of protection of human rights that you have used?

I consider that 3 of my best practices in advocacy are: Form strategic alliances to maximize the impact and share resources. Utilize social media (Youtube my favorite), traditional media, public events, and community outreach to educate and engage the public. Engage in constructive dialogue to propose solutions.