



GUATEMALA

THE PROBLEM SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Despite the beauty of Guatemala, there is a hidden plague of sexual violence against children. In some neighborhoods, 1 in 4 adolescent girls is a victim of sexual violence. Many of the children we serve are from “red zones.” Governments designate these areas as particularly dangerous because they are prone to natural disaster—but in this case, they are colored red because of extreme violence. When IJM began exploring opening an office in 2005, human rights experts said the system was too broken and would never protect the poor. Nearly a decade later, a stronger law and a new Sex Crimes Unit exist, evidence of a country getting serious about tackling the crime.



THE FACTS

An estimated **1 in 5 women** will be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime.¹



For many poor girls, **school is the most common place where sexual violence occurs**—and the fear of violence is a common reason girls leave school.²

In Guatemala, **private security forces outnumber public police 7 to 15.**³

IJM GUATEMALA PROGRESS SINCE 2005



250+

survivors rescued from sexual violence



135+

survivors currently receiving aftercare services from IJM



185+

convicted for sexual violence related crimes



“Your honor, I want to make this quite clear: If anything happens to me or my family, it is because of these men. Please bring them to justice.”

–Griselda,* as she boldly testified in court against the men who raped her when she was 13 years old

How IJM Guatemala Combats Sexual Violence

We rescue children out of dangerous situations of sexual violence by working with government authorities. We receive case referrals from the courts, public prosecutors, other NGOs, the department of social services, churches and families. We ensure that every child is brought to a place of safety.

We bring criminals to justice. IJM investigators help police develop and track down leads to find and arrest the suspect. This can sometimes take months or even years, but it likely wouldn't happen at all if IJM was not involved. IJM lawyers represent survivors in court or work with prosecutors to build a strong case, and we help survivors who choose to share the truth in court prepare for their testimony.

We restore survivors by providing consistent support to the child and the family so she or he can heal in a safe and stable environment. IJM social workers and psychologists develop treatment plans for each survivor concentrating on physical health, trauma-focused counseling, personal security, and education or economic self-sufficiency.

We strengthen justice systems by equipping prosecutors, judges and police respond to sex crimes against children and treat the victims with sensitivity. In a five-year review of court files, IJM discovered that only 3 out of every 10 cases received a full investigation. The current System Reform project began in 2014 and will train the Guatemalan National Police and the Sex Crimes Unit to effectively investigate cases so trials can actually occur.

IJM GUATEMALA MILESTONES

- 2005**
IJM GUATEMALA OPENS
- 2009**
GUATEMALA REVISES LAW
Trafficking and sex crimes are clearly defined and penalties are strengthened after years of advocacy from IJM and others.
- 2012**
100TH CONVICTION SECURED IN IJM GUATEMALA CASE
- 2013**
NEW NATIONWIDE STANDARDS SET WITH IJM'S GUIDANCE
IJM helps draft mandatory standards for handling child sexual assault cases, approved by the Attorney General and the Supreme Court.
- 2014**
IJM AUTHORIZED TO TRAIN POLICE
An official agreement with the Vice President and others invites IJM to train all police, focusing on the new Sex Crimes Unit.



FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR BRAD TWEDT

Brad leads IJM's team in Guatemala to combat sexual violence against children in partnership with government authorities. After a twenty-year career as a lawyer in Chicago, Brad joined IJM in Guatemala in 2011 as a Legal Fellow, and he has been the director since 2012.



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INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. IJM partners with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems.

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