

# CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

## THE PROBLEM CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS ABUSES

Hundreds of thousands of people from ethnic minority groups (called hill tribes) in Northern Thailand are not recognized as Thai citizens—despite their legal right to citizenship. Many hill tribes have been living along these mountainous regions for generations, long before modern country borders were drawn. Laws exist to incorporate hill tribes as citizens, but the application process is complex and difficult to navigate for people living in poverty. Without citizenship, stateless people are not protected by any law, are often denied access to medical care or education, and they cannot work or travel outside their district. With or without citizenship, children also face a high risk of sexual violence in Thailand.

## IJM CHIANG MAI PROGRESS SINCE 2000



**22,500+**

hill tribe  
people received  
legal status



**70+**

children rescued  
from sexual  
violence



**60+**

criminals  
convicted for  
sexual violence



### THE FACTS

There are **10 million stateless people** worldwide.<sup>1</sup>



About a dozen hill tribes (ethnic minority groups) live in Thailand's northern and western highlands alone—an estimated 600,000 to 1 million people.<sup>2</sup>

**Lack of citizenship is the major risk factor** for hill tribe women and girls for being trafficked or otherwise exploited.<sup>3</sup>



“We could never believe that we would have citizenship. But when IJM came, I trusted them and believed that they could help.”

-Meeyu and her daughter who is pictured with her ID card

## How IJM Thailand Combats Abuse and Advocates for Citizenship

**We travel throughout** Thailand’s remote northern hill tribe region to help stateless hill tribe people apply for the citizenship to which they are legally entitled. We relentlessly advocate on their behalf to move their cases through overburdened government offices that oversee the citizenship application process.

**We work closely with local partners** to bring perpetrators of sexual violence to justice and restore survivors. Our partners provide trauma therapy and support families so children can heal in a safe and stable environment.

**We strengthen justice systems** by providing training and hands-on mentoring to government authorities so they can grant hill tribe people citizenship, processing applications effectively, reliably and efficiently. We also work with local communities to train and support volunteers who can advocate for citizenship rights of ethnic minorities in their communities.

### IJM CHIANG MAI MILESTONES

2000

#### IJM THAILAND OPENS

2011

#### ONE FAMILY’S VICTORY AFTER A DECADE

Ten years after they first applied, one hill tribe family receives citizenship.

2012

#### NEW PROJECT BEGINS

IJM begins a new project to defend children who are victims of sexual violence.

2014

#### POLICE EQUIPPED TO PROTECT

More than 100 police officers from 32 police stations receive training on how to protect children from sexual violence.

2017

#### THAILAND AMENDS LAW

Citizenship application process streamlined; one governor approves 913 applications in a day!



#### FIELD OFFICE DIRECTOR KHEM SAKSAKUNMONGKHON

Khem is a member of the Akha hill tribe in northern Thailand. He is the first person from his village to graduate high school and the second person from his tribe to become a lawyer. Khem joined IJM in 2003 as an attorney, and he became Field Office Director in 2007.



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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.

\*A pseudonym. All text and images © 2019 International Justice Mission