

“Some people think [citizenship] is just a plastic card – but in reality, those without that card don’t have a life.”

-Khem Saksakunmongkhon  
Field Office Director, IJM Thailand



“There is no doubt in our minds that when you address root problems such as lack of citizenship, you help people where it really counts...As a church we are committed to doing this kind of measured, results-oriented mission work.”

-Ron Burdock, Director of Global Outreach  
North Park Community Church



(Pictured above) A team from North Park Community Church visits with staff from IJM Thailand and Compassion Thailand. North Park Community Church supports IJM’s legal status documentation project in Northern Thailand. Read more: [IJM.ca/NorthPark](http://IJM.ca/NorthPark)



Help us secure citizenship for more hill tribe members.  
**Please consider a financial gift today.**

For hill tribe members, citizenship is more than just a card.

Though hill tribe members are eligible for Thai citizenship under national law, many are unable to attain it due to complex regulations, lack of access to resources, social prejudice and government apathy. Without legal status, hill tribe members are stateless and cannot buy land, travel outside authorized regions, vote, legally work, receive health care, or access government-funded programs. Deep-seated societal prejudices against hill-tribe members mean citizenship applications at the district office frequently go unfiled and local officials are often unwilling to make unpopular decisions regarding hill tribe members’ legal status.

Citizenship can change everything for a hill tribe member. For this very reason, hill tribe members from the Mae Taeng district

of Northern Thailand nearly filled the room to capacity for a town hall meeting about citizenship with IJM’s legal status documentation coordinator and the newly-appointed deputy sheriff, a local government official.

Several years ago, authorities discovered some fraudulent citizenship applications from the district and, as a result, halted the citizenship applications of approximately 5,000 hill tribe members – the vast majority so deeply impoverished there was no way they could ever afford legal representation to move their legitimate applications forward. The Ajai family’s applications

**450,000+**  
hill-tribe members lack legal status

were among them. The family had filed for citizenship in 2000. Then, five years ago, were notified that their applications had been halted as part of the on-going investigation. While the investigation was warranted, there was no formal appeal process or means of accountability in place to help the family, who were lawfully Thai citizens. By 2010, the family had been waiting for citizenship for more than a decade.

The case was referred to IJM Thailand, who intervened directly on behalf of the family. Staff worked tirelessly with the district office to process the family’s application through the legal system. At long last, with IJM’s help, the family was granted citizenship. Finally, they could legally work, receive health care, and own land. And for the first time in their lives,

the country where they were born and lived acknowledged their identities as Thai citizens.

The Ajai family’s case was a breakthrough. After years of stagnation at the district office, local government officials indicated that they were willing to work with IJM staff to process other eligible hill tribe citizenship applications.

At the town hall meeting that day, the deputy sheriff was in attendance for his first visit to the village. His presence was a profound break in the norm. It was a signal to other hill tribe members that their identities might also be acknowledged.

Learn more: [IJM.ca/citizenship](http://IJM.ca/citizenship)

[IJM.ca/give](http://IJM.ca/give)