



CHIANG MAI, THAILAND

THE PROBLEM CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS ABUSES; SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

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.



THE FACTS

There are **10 million stateless people** worldwide.¹



An estimated **20% of the world's stateless live in Thailand**—about 2.5 million.²

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

Children from ethnic minorities or migrant populations in Thailand are **especially susceptible to human trafficking**.⁴

IJM THAILAND PROGRESS SINCE 2000



17,500+

hill tribe people have received citizenship rights



65+

children rescued from sexual violence



50+

criminals convicted for sexual violence



“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 rescue children out of dangerous situations of sexual violence by working with local authorities. We receive case referrals from partner organizations, churches and families. We ensure that every child is brought to a place of safety.

We bring perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. We investigate cases, help Thai police to arrest criminals and support prosecution of rapists and other child abusers.

We restore survivors by providing trauma therapy and supporting families so children can heal in a safe and stable environment. We help survivors prepare to share the truth in court.

We strengthen justice systems by providing training and hands-on mentoring to government authorities so they can grant hill tribe people citizenship and protect children from abuse. We advocate for reforms to the court process to protect children.

IJM THAILAND 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.



PO Box 336 STN B
London, ON N6A 4W1
P 519.679.5030
F 519.679.3358
IJM.ca

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. International Justice Mission Canada shares in this mission.

*A pseudonym. All text and images © 2018 International Justice Mission