



IJM CASEWORK SERIES

# CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS ABUSE

**Worldwide, an estimated 12 million people are stateless, meaning they hold no citizenship of any kind. No citizenship means no country claims you—and no justice system protects you.**

Millions of people from Northern Thailand, who belong to ethnic minority groups known as hill tribes, have been denied their rightful citizenship by the local government.

These hill tribe members may be denied care at a hospital, prohibited from owning land, or arrested for traveling outside their home district. They are not guaranteed rights to school or to a fair wage. And without the protection of the law, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence, like sexual abuse and human trafficking.

## OUR IMPACT AROUND THE WORLD



**22,500+**

Children, women and men granted legal status with IJM's help since 2000



**2,394**

People secured with legal citizenship status in IJM cases in 2018 alone



**14**

Longest time (in years) an IJM client has waited for legal status

## QUICK FACTS

**12**  
MILLION

There are about **12 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 in Thailand for being trafficked or otherwise exploited.<sup>3</sup>



## 14 YEARS WAITING TO FEEL FREE

Athu applied for his legal rights in 2000 and enlisted IJM's help in 2009. We celebrated together as he secured citizenship in 2014. "I thought this day would never come," he said. "Before I was not a person. Now I am!"



**WHERE WE WORK:**  
**CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS ABUSE**



**SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Chiang Mai, Thailand

**OUR RESPONSE**  
*Thailand*

We have helped thousands of eligible hill tribe members get citizenship documentation—a right that guarantees them freedom to move about their country without fear of arrest, a right to work and educate their children, and rights to full protection of the law. IJM assists hill tribe people with the complex application process and relentlessly advocates on their behalf to move their cases through overburdened government offices that can grant citizenship.



**“I am no longer afraid of anything now, because I have citizenship.”**

*—Noi, Secured with her rightful Thai citizenship and the protection she deserves*

## Meet Noi

**NOI WAS HEARTBROKEN.** She had won a scholarship to finish school, but she could not claim it. She needed citizenship to qualify, but Noi was one of two million stateless people born in Thailand who are not protected in their own country. There was nothing she could do. She told us simply: “You cannot even imagine what life is like without an ID card in Thailand.”

Stateless people like Noi face discrimination and hardship every day without their rightful citizenship. Children may not be able to graduate from school, and adults cannot travel about freely. Many young women like Noi become vulnerable to trafficking and abuse this way because they have so few options.

Determined, Noi made more than ten trips to the government office to pursue citizenship on her own. But each time, officials ignored her or asked for a bribe. Then a friend told her about IJM. We filed a legal case on Noi’s behalf and spent the next three years fighting for her rights.

In July 2012, Noi celebrated when she got her official Thai ID card. One IJM staff member explains, “[Now] she has life, she can do anything...she can achieve her dreams!”

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**INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION CANADA** is part of 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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