

CHAPTER V

CHIANG RAI AND THE CASE STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Chiang Rai's basic information and stateless hill tribe people in the province. Then it presents the personal backgrounds of the former stateless people selected as case studies in this research.

5.2 Chiang Rai and stateless hill tribe people

5.2.1 Chiang Rai Province's basic information

Chiang Rai was founded in 1262 by King Meng Rai and was the capital of Lanna Thai Kingdom. The kingdom was later defeated by Burma and became a Thai territory in 1786. Chiang Rai was announced as a province (Changwat) under the Kingdom of Thailand in 1910 (Tourism Authority of Thailand [TAT], 2007).

Chiang Rai is the northernmost province of Thailand. The province with an area of 11,678.369 square meters is located on the Kok River basin and about 785 kilometers from Bangkok. It is on the area of 'North Continental Highland' of Thailand. The average elevation of Chiang Rai is 410-580 meters above sea level while the highest area is around 1,500-2,000 meters above sea level. (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008). Around 4,000 square meters or 32.42% of the whole area is forest areas. There are 30 preserved forest areas and 5 national parks, Doi Luang, Khun-Jae, Phusang, Mae Puem and Maekok River. (Ibid). Chiang Rai's adjacent provinces are Phayao, Lampang and Chiang Mai. The north border of Chiang Rai borders Shan State of Myanmar and Bokeo and Oudomxai of Laos (Ibid.).

Chiang Rai's population number in 2008 was 1,227,137; 606,775 males and 620,542 females (Thailand's Department of Provincial Administration [DOPA] cited in Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008). Chiang Rai's geographical and physical appearances have made it a home for various tribes, a collective term for the minority ethnic groups in the North of Thailand such as the Karen, Akha, Lisu, Meo and Muser. Chiang Rai is divided into 18 districts (Amphoe) as below.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Muaeng Chiang Rai District | 10. Mae Suai District |
| 2. Wiang Chai District | 11. Wiang Pa Pao District |
| 3. Chiang Khong District | 12. Phaya Mengrai District |
| 4. Thoeng District | 13. Wiang Kaen District |
| 5. Phan District | 14. Khun Tan District |
| 6. Pa Daet District | 15. Mae Fa Luang District |
| 7. Mae Chan District | 16. Mae Lao District |
| 8. Chiang Saen District | 17. Wiang Chiang Rung District |
| 9. Mae Sai District | 18. Doi Luang District |

(Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008)

Among the 18 districts in Chiang Rai, Muang Chiang Rai district, Mae Chan District and Mae Fa Luang District were selected by the researcher to mark the study area. The selection was based on consideration of the diversity of local administration and the availability of the key informants. Moreover it was found that the three districts are a home of a large number of hill tribes.

5.2.2 Muaeng Chiang Rai District basic information

Muaeng Chiang Rai District or the city of Chiang Rai is the center of economical and cultural activities in Chiang Rai Province. It covers the area of 1,284.41 square meters (www.chiangraifocus.com , 2008). The district is divided into 16 sub-districts (Tambon) which include 228 villages (Muban). In 2008, there were 225,975 people in the district dividing into 109,440 males and 116,535 females (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008).

5.2.3 Mae Chan District basic information

Mae Chan District was once named Chiang Saen district. In 1939, another minor district was renamed as Chiang Saen while the old Chiang Saen was renamed to Mae Chan. The district covers the area of 551 square meters. It is divided into 11 sub-districts (Tambon) which include 138 villages (Muban) (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008). Mae Chan's neighboring districts are Mae Sai in the north, Chiang Saen and Doi Luang in the east, Mueang Chiang Rai in the south and Mae Fa Luang in the west. All are under Chiang Rai Province (www.chiangraifocus.com, 2008). Its population was reported to be 103,795 people in 2008. The number was divided into 50,791 males and 53,304 females (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008).

5.2.4 Mae Fa Luang District basic information

Mae Fa Luang District was once under the government of Mae Chan District. It was separated from Mae Chan and was established as a district in 1992. It covers the area of 641.404 square meters. The district is divided into 4 sub-districts (Tambon) which include 76 villages (Muban) (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008). The north eastern border of Mae Fa Luang District is adjacent to Mae Sai district and Mae Chan district of Chiang Rai Province. Its southern border is next to Mueang Chiang Rai district while its south western border is closed to Mae Ai district of Chiang Mai Province. Its north western borders Shan State of Myanmar (www.chiangraifocus.com , 2008). In 2008, it was reported to have 79,576 people divided into 40,012 males and 39,564 females (Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Office, 2008).

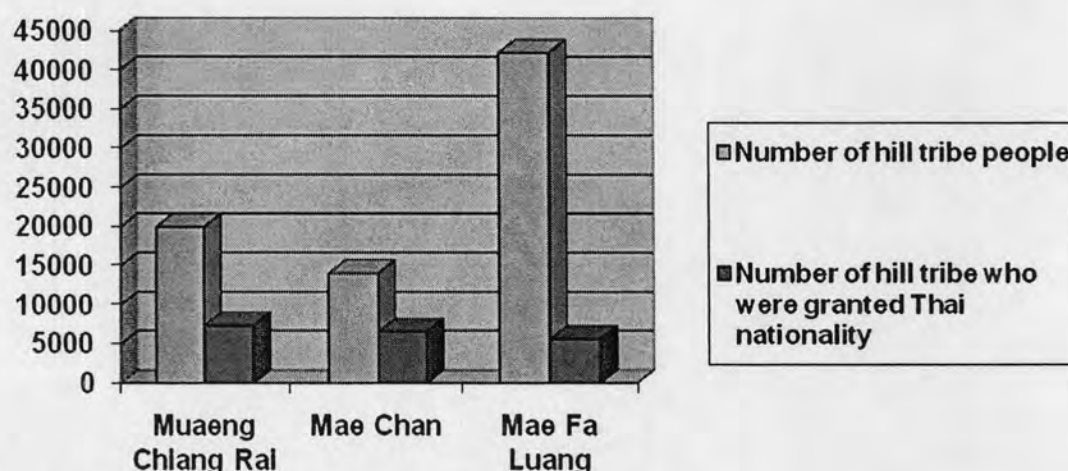
5.2.5 Stateless hill tribe people in the selected districts

A current number of hill tribe people and minority people in Chiang Rai was not available. However, it was reported that there were 147,312 hill tribe people in Chiang Rai in 1997 (Department of Public Welfare, 2002: 7-10). DPW said, there were 42,205 people in Mae Fa Luang District, 19,966 in Mueang Chiang Rai District and 14,041 people in Mae Chan District in 1997. Mae Fa Luang ranked the first place where hill tribe people in

Chiang Rai lived while Muaeng Chia Rai ranked the third place and the fourth place was Mae Chan.

It was also reported that among the hill tribe people in the districts, 5,620 people in Mae Fa Luang, 7,329 in Muaeng Chiang Rai and 6,548 people in Mae Chan were granted Thai nationality (Ibid.). It means 12,637 hill tribe people in Muaeng Chiang Rai, 7,493 people in Mae Chan and 36,585 in Mae Fa Luang lacked Thai nationality in 1997. In other words, 63% of hill tribe people in Muaeng Chiang Rai, 53% in Mae Chan and 87% in Mae Fa Luang were left stateless.

Figure 5.2 Number of hill tribe people granted Thai nationality in the selected districts in 1997



Source: Department of Public Welfare, 2002: 7-10

5.2.6 Granting Thai nationality in the selected districts

There was not a record on the number of people who requested for Thai nationality in the three selected districts in Chiang Rai. Only the number of people who were granted Thai nationality was recorded (as seen in Table 5.1-5.3). However, the information of Mae Chan District and Muaeng Chiang Rai District was not complete. Only Mae Fa Luang District Office could provide complete information on number of people who were granted Thai nationality according to three main channels; Sect. 7 bis. , Sect. 23 and Reg. 2000.

Table 5.1 Number of requests for Thai nationality approved in Muaeng Chiang Rai District during 2000-2009

Channel Year	Reg. 2000	Sect. 7 bis.	Sect. 23
2000	1,083	N/A	0
2001	390	N/A	0
2002	N/A	N/A	0
2003	N/A	N/A	0
2004	N/A	N/A	0
2005	N/A	635	0
2006	N/A	452	0
2007	N/A	252	0
2008	0	141	N/A
2009	0	219	N/A
Total			8,805

Remarks:

1. A request form to acquire Thai nationality according to the Reg. 2000 can be used for a person or a whole family so the number of people granted Thai nationality is not equipped.
2. A request form to acquire Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 bis. as well as a request form according to Sect. 23 is used for a person only.
3. N/A = the information was not available
4. 0 = None of the requests was granted Thai nationality

Source: Numbers given by Muaeng Chiang Rai District Administration Office

Nisarath, legal officer of Muaeng Chiang Rai District Administration Office, said that there was not a record on people granted Thai nationality in the district according to each law but the total number of the people who were granted Thai nationality by Reg. 2000 and Sect. 7 bis since the year 2000 is 8,805 people (Nisarath Charoendharmphong, personal interview, 20 February, 2009). Yet, the number of people granted Thai nationality according to Section 23 of Thai Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008) was not available. Nisarath said, the law was very new so the record had not yet been complete. All she could say was that so many of requests had been submitted and quite a lot of them were approved and more and more were coming in (Ibid.).

Table 5.2 Number of people granted Thai nationality in Mae Chan District in 2008

Channel Year	Reg. 2000	Sect. 7 bis	Sect. 23
2000	N/A	N/A	0
2001	N/A	N/A	0
2002	N/A	N/A	0
2003	N/A	N/A	0
2004	N/A	N/A	0
2005	N/A	N/A	0
2006	N/A	N/A	0
2007	N/A	N/A	0
2008	244	0	974
2009	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A
Grand Total			N/A

Remarks:

1. N/A = the information was not available
2. 0 = None of the requests was granted Thai nationality

Source: Numbers given by Mae Chan District Administration Office

According to Potchanee, legal officer at Mae Chan District Administration Office, the number of people granted Thai nationality in Mae Chan District had not been recorded until when she started her work in the office a year ago. So, the number provided was only the data in 2008 (Potchanee Kansri, personal interview, 25 February 2009). It can be seen that there was not a number of people granted Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000. Potchanee explained, "There were not many requests according to the regulation anymore because it was hard to get. We also believed that all the indigenous hill tribe Thai had already got Thai nationality. The people who left out shall be new comers"(Ibid.).

Table 5.3 Number of people granted Thai nationality in Mae Fa Luang District during 2003-January 2009

Year \ Channel	Reg. 2000	Sect. 7 bis	Sect. 23
2000	N/A	N/A	0
2000	N/A	N/A	0
2001	N/A	N/A	0
2002	N/A	N/A	0
2003	0	0	0
2004	0	171	0
2005	135	1,114	0
2006	352	2,403	0
2007	104	1,073	0
2008	1,420	259	758
2009	128	0	64
Total	2,139	5,022	822
Grand Total			7,983

Remarks:

3. N/A = the information was not available
4. 0 = None of the requests was granted Thai nationality

Source: Numbers given by Mae Fa Luang District Administration Office in January 2009.

Praphan, Assistant District Chief, said that since there were a large number of stateless people in Mae Fa Luang District, mission regarding granting Thai nationality and personal legal status to the people became the major work of registration section in the District Office (Prapan Suriwong, personal interview, 25 February 2009). This might be the reason why the office has a complete and systematical number of the people granted Thai nationality during 2003-2009.

In sum, there were more than 56,000 stateless hill tribe people in Muaeng Chiang Rai, MaeChan and Mae Fa Luang in 1997. Due to the fact that this number has not yet included other groups of stateless people and stateless children born later, it can be said that there are still a large number of stateless people in the selected three districts when it is compared to the number people granted Thai nationality.

5.3 Background of the selected samplings

There are 12 former stateless people featured in this study; 4 cases from Muaeng Chiang Rai District, 4 cases from Mae Chan District and 4 cases from Mae Fa Luang District. The age of the key informants was ranking from 16-52. While most of them were between 15-24 years old, the average age was 28 years old. Among them, there were 7 men and 5 women. All of the key informants were hill tribe people from Akha (E-kor) tribe. Most of them attended school education although none of them pursued higher education. Those who did not participate in school education usually earned their living by farming or hired as daily laborers while those who finished schools may work in some other fields such as construction worker, driver, maids, etc.

Table 5.4: Personal Backgrounds of Selected Former Stateless Interviewees

No.	Name (alias)	District (Amphoe)	Age	Sex	Ethni-city	Education	Thai lang. Ability	Occupation
1	Ai	Muaeng	16	Female	Akha	studying M. 6	Good	Student
2	Ah-Soh	Muaeng	43	Male	Akha	-	Poor	Farmer, daily laborer
3	Ah-Kong	Muaeng	22	Male	Akha	M. 6	Good	Domestic worker
4	Ah-Yae	Muaeng	23	Male	Akha	P. 5	Fair	Construction worker
5	Kaew	Mae Chan	19	Female	Akha	M. 3 with nursing assistant diploma	Good	Unemployed
6	Paya	Mae Chan	19	Female	Akha	P. 6	Fair	Farmer. daily laborer
7	Ah-Ser	Mae Chan	22	Male	Akha	M.3	Good	Farmer
8	Ah-Pha	Mae Chan	25	Male	Akha	M.3	Good	Driver
9	Bajor	Mae Fa Luang	39	Male	Akha	P. 6	Good	Farmer, raises cattle
10	Yapa	Mae Fa Luang	25	Female	Akha	P. 6	Fair	Farmer, raises cattle
11	Mata	Mae Fa Luang	52	Male	Akha	-	Poor	Farmer, raises cattle
12	Buya	Mae Fa Luang	32	Female	Akha	-	Fair	Farmer, raises cattle

Table 5.5: Number of Selected Former/Present Stateless Interviewees Grouped by Personal Background

Background	Details	Number	Total
Residence (Amphoe)	Muaeng Chiang Rai District	4	12
	Mae Fa Luang District	4	
	Mae Chan District	4	
Age	15-24	6	12
	25-39	4	
	40-55	2	
	Older than 55	0	
Sex	Male	7	12
	Female	5	
Ethnicity	Akha	12	12
	Others	0	
Education	Never receive school education	3	12
	Enroll primary school but not finish	1	
	Finish primary level (Prathom 6)	4	
	Finish half secondary level (Mattayom 3)	3	
	Finish secondary (Mattayom 6)	1	
	Finish higher education	0	
Central Thai Language Ability	Good - Able to speak, read and write Thai well	6	12
	Fair - Able to speak Thai well, able to read and write basic Thai	4	
	Poor - Able to communicate by basic verbal language - unable to read or write	2	
	Unable	0	
Occupation	Farming – raises cattle, daily labor	8	12
	Employed for industrial/construction work	1	
	Employed for other works	1	
	Unemployed	1	
	Others	1	
Channels to obtain Thai nationality	Adding names to Tor Ror 14 (DNA Test)	1	12
	Naturalization	0	
	Section 7 bis. of Thai Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2535 (C.E. 1992)	0	
	Section 23 of Thai Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008)	3	
	The Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000).	8	

It is found that school education was the main factor that influenced the former stateless' Thai language ability. It can be seen that half of the people able to use every aspect of Thai language in a good level. Most of the people in this group had attended high school education. The second group of people fairly speaks, reads and writes basic

Thai. This group of people had a chance to attend primary school education. At the same time, the last group of people who did not attend schools could not read or write Thai at all. This group usually learned to speak central Thai or northern Thai dialect by themselves. Some of them were quite good at it but some can only communicate in a very basic language.

It is also found that age, level of education, personal experience and Thai language ability of the stateless interviewed in this study appear to have a positive impact on obtaining Thai nationality. Young people or those who finished higher school education or people who were able to read and write Thai language well or the ones who had experienced working or associating with people in the city tend to be more involved in the process.

Table 5.3: Overview of Selected Former Stateless Interviewees' acquiring Thai nationality

No.	Name (alias)	No. of Request	Year started the process	Year submit 1 st request	Year submit last request	Year request approved	Period of process since beginning	Period of process since submission of last request	With Asst. of MF	Channels to obtain Thai nationality
1	Ai	2	2001	2001	2003	2008	7 Yrs.	5 Yrs.	X	Reg. 2000
2	Ah-Soh	3	2005	2005	2008	2009	4 Yrs.	6 Months	X	Sect. 23
3	Ah-Kong	3	2004	2006	2008	2009	5 Yrs.	3 Months		Sect. 23
4	Ah-Yae	1	2001	2001	2001	2005	4 Yrs.	4 Yrs		Reg. 2000
5	Kaew	1	2004	2008	2008	2009	5 Yrs.	6 Months	X	Reg. 2000 (DNA test)
6	Paya	1	2006	2006	2008	2008	2 Yrs.	6 Months	X	Tor Ror 14 (DNA test)
7	Ah-Ser	5	2003	2003	2008	2008	5 Yrs.	6 Months	X	Reg. 2000
8	Ah-Pha	3	2000	2000	2008	2008	9 Yrs.	3 Months		Sect. 23
9	Bajor	2	2005	2006	2008	2008	3 Yrs.	6 Months	X	Reg. 2000
10	Yapa	1	2004	2004	2004	2006	2Yrs.	2Yrs.		Reg. 2000
11	Mata	3	1991	1992	2008	2009	18 Yrs.	8 Months	X	Reg. 2000
12	Buya	2	2005	2005	2006	2006	2 Yrs.	10 Months		Reg. 2000

Regarding their background in acquiring Thai nationality, there were three channels used by the former stateless key informants to obtain Thai nationality namely; 1) Tor Ror 14, 2) The Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000), and 3) Section 23 of Thai Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008). More than half of them

have gained Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000. Most of them submitted the evidence in acquiring Thai nationality for several times before they succeeded. Seven of them were assisted by the Mirror Foundation. In average, they spent a long time to obtain Thai nationality since they started the process, ranked from 2 years to 18 years. However, after submission of the last request, most of them spent 3 months – 1 year to get Thai nationality.

5.4 Life histories of former stateless people

5.4.1 “Ai”

<i>Age:</i>	17	<i>Sex:</i>	Female
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Single
<i>Education:</i>	M. 6	<i>Occupation:</i>	Student
<i>District:</i>	Mueang Chiang Rai		
<i>Interview date:</i>	23 February 2009		
<i>Year started obtaining process:</i>	2001		
<i>Year submitted the first request:</i>	2001		
<i>Year submitted the last request:</i>	2003		
<i>Year granted Thai nationality:</i>	2008		
<i>Channel in obtaining Thai nationality:</i>	Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)		

Family background and life story:

Ai’s mother, Ah-Mu, is 47 years old. Her father died six years ago. Ai, aged 17, is the second child of 4 children in the family. Her older sister, Aoey, is 21. Her younger sister, Chan, is 13 and her younger brother, Chart, is 10. Ai is a last year student in a high school. Aoey now lives and works in the city of Chiang Rai. She is studying in a high vocational school. Ai’s family is an example of hill tribe family that usually moved to many different places. Ah-Mu said that both she and Ai’s father were born in Tambon Huay Chompoo, a remote area in Mueng Chiang Rai district. She said it was in the

backcountry and hard to make a living. The family moved to Tambon Baan Du in 1997. A year later they moved to the current place according to a relative's suggestion.

Stories of obtaining Thai nationality:

The family was not registered in any government population surveys until 1999. The family had firstly submitted the evidence to acquire Thai nationality in 2001 with the assistance of the village chief, just like other families in the village but there has never been an answer. After Ai's father died, Aoey, the first child, submitted the family's request for Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000 with the assistance of the MF in 2003. However, the district administration office refused to grant the family Thai nationality according to the regulation but offered to grant Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 bis, like other families in the same village. Aoey learned from the MF that those who was granted Thai nationality according to sect. 7 bis. would not be able to work in a government organization and the kind of Thai nationality could be withdrawn by the government. So the family insisted to acquire Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000. After so many times of investigation and conflicts, the family was granted Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000 in 2008.

5.4.2 "Ah-Soh"

Age: 45 ***Sex:*** Male
Ethnicity: Akha ***Marital status:*** Married
Education: - ***Occupation:*** Farmer, daily laborer
District: Muaeng Chiang Rai
Interview date: 23 February 2009
Year started obtaining process: 2005
Year submitted the first request: 2005
Year submitted the last request: 2008
Year granted Thai nationality: 2009
Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Section 23 of the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008)

Family background and life story:

Ah-Soh is a 45 year-old Akha. His wife, Buba, is 42. They have 3 children, two boys and one girl. The first son, Ah-Cha, is 19. The second son, Ah-Chae, is 17. Meeju, the youngest child is a daughter aged 14. They lived in a small village not very far from Chiang Rai city. Ah-Soh and his wife were born of indigenous hill tribe parents in another village in Muaeng Chiang Rai District.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

The family had joined the government's survey on highland community in 1999. Ah-Soh firstly submitted the evidence to acquire Thai nationality in 2005 according to Reg. 2000 under the assistance of MF. A week later, his request was turned down. The District Chief refused to grant Thai nationality to the family according to the regulation but suggested them to acquire Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 bis. The reason of rejection was that Ah-Soh's parents, as well as Buba's parents, did not have birth certificate or other official documents to prove that they were indigenous Thais. Therefore, Ah-Soh and Buba, in spite of the fact that they were born in Thailand, were not eligible to acquire Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000.

The family then submitted an appeal to registration officer in the district administration office according to the suggestions of the MF. In the appeal, Ah-Soh argued that his parents, like most of hill tribe people, were not registered as citizens in the civil census while his wife's parents died before the government's survey on highland community. So, it was impossible to request for the community records of their parents. Moreover, it was widely accepted that it was almost impossible to request for any official documents related to people's birth form those who were born before 1967 because Thailand's civil registration system at that time was not complete.

The district appeal committee decided to grant Thai nationality according to the Reg. 2000 to the family's two sons only. The rest of the family, Ah-Soh, Buba and Meeju had to acquire Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 bis.

Ah-Soh submitted the requests for Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 *bis*. for himself, his wife and daughter in 2006. However, acquiring Thai nationality according to this law normally takes a long time because it needs the Minister of Interior's approval. Every time he went to the district office to ask for the progress, the only answer he got was 'wait'. Another chance came along in 2008 when the new nationality act, Nationality Act 1965 as amended in 2008, was passed. Again, Ah-Soh, with the assistance of the MF, submitted the requests for the rest three stateless in the family; his wife, daughter and himself, according to Section 23 of the act. Finally, all of them were granted Thai nationality recently in January 2009.

5.4.3 "Ah-Kong"

Age: 22 *Sex:* Male
Ethnicity: Akha *Marital status:* Single
Education: M. 6 *Occupation:* Domestic worker
District: Mueang Chiang Rai
Interview date: 26 February 2009
Year started obtaining process: 2004
Year submitted the first request: 2006
Year submitted the last request: 2008
Year granted Thai nationality: 2009
Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Section 23 of the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008)

Family background and life story:

Ah-Kong's family migrated from Myanmar in 1985. Born in Mae Chan District in 1987, he was the third child of the family. His brothers were born in Myanmar. His family moved from Mae Chan District to Mueang Chiang Rai District in 1989 to stay close to relatives.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

The family joined the government's survey of highland population in 1991. Ah-Kong's parents never tried to acquire Thai nationality for him.

“At first, my parents thought I did not have the right to Thai nationality because the rest of the family did not. Later they learned from neighbors that I might be able to acquire Thai nationality. However, they did not do it for me because my parents cannot speak Thai very well. Most of all, they did not know where to start” (Ah-Kong, personal interview, 26 February 2009).

Around the year 2004, together with a number of stateless students in the same school, Ah-Kong submitted evidence to acquire Thai nationality with the assistance of the MF. He is not sure what channel was used to acquire nationality at that time because he let the organization did everything for him. He said he did not try to follow up because at that time he was young and did not realize the importance of Thai nationality.

“I have just known how importance nationality is after I finished the school and needed to find a job. It was incredibly difficult for people like us to find a job. I envied Thai friends. They were not better than me but they got a better job and better paid” (Ibid.).

Later in 2006, Ah-Kong decided to work on nationality on his own. He came to Muaeng Chiang Rai District Administration Office and asked the officer if he could acquire Thai nationality and what he should do. He could not submit the request form right away because he did not have birth certificate. He needed to go through the process of requesting for birthplace certificate which includes investigating a lot of witnesses. It took him 3 months to get birthplace certification from Mae Sai District Administration Office. He finally submitted all the evidence and the request form to acquire Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 *bis.* at Muaeng Chiang Rai District Office in 2007. After submission of documents and investigations, Ah-Kong came to the district office twice a month to follow up his case. Every time he came, the officers told him that his case was on process.

It was until the beginning of 2008 that the district legal officer told him to submit another request form in June 2008. This time he only needed to submit the request form

for acquiring Thai nationality according to the Nationality Act 1965 as amended in 2008. He was not asked to submit the evidence or to come for the investigations. The officer said he could use the same ones that were submitted to the office as evidence of the request according to Section 23 of Nationality Act 1965 as amended in 2008. Ah-Kong was finally approved to have Thai nationality in January 2009.

5.4.4 “Ah-Yae”

<i>Age:</i>	23	<i>Sex:</i>	Male
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Single
<i>Education:</i>	P. 5	<i>Occupation:</i>	Construction worker
<i>District:</i>	Mueang Chiang Rai		
<i>Interview date:</i>	26 February 2009		
<i>Year started obtaining process:</i>	2001		
<i>Year submitted the first request:</i>	2001		
<i>Year submitted the last request:</i>	2001		
<i>Year granted Thai nationality:</i>	2005		
<i>Channel in obtaining Thai nationality:</i>	Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)		

Family background and life story:

Ah-Yae was born in Mae Fa Luang District but was raised in Mueang Chiang Rai District. He is the oldest son of a big family comprised of a father, two mothers and seven children. At the age of 20, Ah-Yae became the leader of his family.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

It was when he was 15 that Ah-Yae firstly learned about his statelessness. Fifteen is the age Thai nationals would get Thai nationals Identification Card. Ah-Yae's friends showed him their cards so he went home to ask his father about it and got the answer. He said he told his father right away that he wanted to be a Thai national. Ah-Yae's father, 76 years old at that time, was a highly regarded person in the village. He took Ah-Yae to

a Thai national friend to ask for a help. His father's friend then took him to the district office for necessary information.

Since Ah-Yae did not have a birth certificate, he was asked to collect birthplace certificate from Mae Fa Luang District Office. He said it was quite difficult to get the certificate. He had to go to Mae Fa Luang District for several times for the investigations. After receiving the birthplace certification, he came back to Muaeng Chiang Rai District Office to submit the evidence as well as the request form for acquiring Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000 in 2001. After that, he and the witnesses had to come for the investigations for many times. It took him months to complete the process. He said he kept coming to the office to ask for the progress of his request. Although there seemed not be any progress, he never gave up. He said, "I was told by my father's friend in the first day we came to the office for information that I had to put efforts and never gave up because acquiring Thai nationality was not easy. Otherwise, I would never get Thai nationality. I think it's true" (Ah-Yae, personal interview, 26 February 2009). His request was finally approved in 2005.

5.4.5 "Kaew"

Age:	19	Sex:	Female
Ethnicity:	Akha	Marital status:	Single
Education:	M. 3	Occupation:	Unemployed
District:	Mae Chan		
Interview date:	13 February 2009		
Year started obtaining process (for step father):	2004		
Year submitted the first request (for step father):	2005		
Year submitted the last request (for step father):	2008		
Year granted Thai nationality (of step father):	2009		
Channel in obtaining Thai nationality:	Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000) and DNA Test		

Family Background and life story:

Kaew finished Mattayom 3 (grade 12) and had completed a nursing assistant course. However, she is unemployed because hospitals usually employ Thai nationals for the position nursing assistants. Kaew is now nineteen and still stateless. She was born of a deaf-mute couple in Mae Chan District. Her father died since she was a baby. Her mother remarried to another deaf-mute person. The girl was raised by her grandmother until she was around 10 years old when she had to move back to live with her mother and step father. She was the only child in the family so she became the only one who had been working on acquiring Thai nationality for the family.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

According to Kaew, her family participated in the one in 1991. The family was given the Highland People Personal Registration Record which was the only document that certifies their rights to nationality. Tragically, the document was burnt in the fire together with their house when she was young. Kaew was familiar with the reflection of her step father repeatedly visited the village chief to ask for assistance in acquiring Thai nationality. Sometimes he had to pay for the help. She did not know how much but she knew that her step father had sold two of their farming areas and gave all the money to the village chief. Still, there was nothing done. Kaew said, her step father's brother was a Thai national but he did not want to be involved too much because he thought that Thai nationality was useless for mute people like her father and mother.

Kaew started the process on acquiring Thai nationality for her family since she was around 14. She and a few stateless friends learned to go to the district office on their own to ask for suggestions from the officials. She was suggested by district officers to submit the request for her step father and her mother first. However, it was impossible because the Highland People Personal Registration Record, the only document evidence they had was lost in the fire. She asked for the copy of the record, but the officer said they had thrown away documents older than 5 years to make space for more documents. Kaew and her family had to continue living as a stateless person.

Finally, she learned about the MF and was suggested by the foundation to use DNA test as a method to prove relationship between Kaew's step father and his Thai national brother. The foundation helped paying half of the expense of DNA testing. The DNA-test result was used as evidence in acquiring Thai nationality for Kaew's step father according to Reg. 2000. At last, his request was approved in January 2009.

5.4.6 "Paya"

Age: 19 *Sex:* Female
Ethnicity: Akha *Marital status:* Married
Education: P. 6 *Occupation:* Farmer, daily laborer
District: Mae Chan
Interview date: 13 February 2009
Year started obtaining process: 2006
Year submitted the first request: 2006
Year submitted the last request: 2008
Year granted Thai nationality: 2008
Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Tor Ror 14 and DNA test

Family Background and life story:

Paya is a new mother of a two weeks old son. Luckily, her son does not have to face the problems of statelessness like his mother had. Paya was born to Thai national parents. Her father and mother were the first generation of hill tribe people surveyed by the government. They were granted Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Nationality of Hill Tribe People B.E. 2535 (C.E. 1992). Unfortunately, when Paya was born, her father did not register her birth. Her mother did not know about this until Paya was around three years old. Her mother asked for help from the village chief for so many times, even paid him (Paya was not sure how much because she was too young). Yet, the problem had not been solved.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Paya started the process in obtaining Thai nationality on her own when she was 16. She went to the district office and asked for suggestions. She requested to have her name added to her mother's Tor Ror 14 in 2006. However, there was not a call for investigations. Paya said that she went to the district office very often to follow up if there was anything could be done. She was not suggested to have a DNA test with her mother until when she spoke directly to the Assistant District Administration Officer in 2008. She had to borrow money from neighbors to pay for the DNA test expense. Six month after submitting the DNA test result, Paya was called to continue the process of Thai national identification card making at the district office.

5.4.7 “Ah-Ser”

<i>Age:</i>	22	<i>Sex:</i>	Male
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Married
<i>Education:</i>	M.3	<i>Occupation:</i>	Farmer
<i>District:</i>	Mae Chan		
<i>Interview date:</i> 22 February 2009			
<i>Year started obtaining process:</i> 2003			
<i>Year submitted the first request:</i> 2003			
<i>Year submitted the last request:</i> 2008			
<i>Year granted Thai nationality:</i> 2008			
<i>Channel in obtaining Thai nationality:</i> Section 23 of the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008)			

Family Background and life story:

Ah-Ser was born of indigenous hill tribe parents. His father died when he was a baby. His mother remarried and moved to live with her new husband in Chiang Mai. Ah-Ser was left in Chiang Rai under the care of his father's relatives. All his life, he had to stay with different relatives starting from his grandmother, then his father's younger brother's family, and then his father's older brother's family. After finishing Mattayom

3, Ah-Ser pursued a vocational certificate but he did not finish because he had a problem with his family.

Ah-Ser had joined the government surveys of highlanders in 1991. He said nobody in his father's family put an effort to acquire Thai nationality for him when he was young. His mother did not come to visit him often so she could not help much. Everyone just told him to do it by himself when he grew up.

"I am a lone person. Nobody truly cared enough to work on nationality for me. You know, it is enormously time-consuming. Moreover, you have to pay a lot of money to the village chief" (Ah-Ser, personal interview, 22 February 2009).

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Ah-Ser started the process in obtaining Thai nationality when he was around 17 years old. He went to Hill Tribe Community Center in Mae Chan for the primary information. After that he went to Mae Chan District Administration Office and showed the officers his document evidence. He submitted his first request form together with document evidence to obtain Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000) in 2003. However, there was not a progress in his request.

"I submitted a new request form and the evidence every year from 2002-2006 but I did not work. The officer never asked me to come for the investigation or requested me to find a witness. I did not understand why. I went to the District office so often that the officers knew me. I was told that the request was on process. They told me to be patient. Everything would be all right" (Ibid.).

In 2008, Ah-ser was assisted by the MF to submit another request form. Two weeks later, the investigation was done. His request was approve in October 2008.

5.4.8 "Ah-Pha"

Age: 25	Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Akha	Marital status: Single
Education: M.3	Occupation: Driver

District: Mae Chan

Interview date: 25 February 2009

Year started obtaining process: 2000

Year submitted the first request: 2000

Year submitted the last request: 2008

Year granted Thai nationality: 2008

Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Section 23 of the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (C.E. 1965) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008)

Family background and life story:

Ah-Pha was born in Thailand of hill tribe migrant parents. His parents were born in Myanmar and migrated to Thailand in 1981 and live in Mae Chan District since then. We met at Mae Chan District Office. After he finished school, Ah-Pha tried to apply for many jobs but was turned down because he did not have any identification card. Later, he had to accept “Migrant Identification Card” since it was the only way that he can apply for a job. He said, “I was born in Thailand and my home is in Thailand. I don’t want to be a migrant but I had no choices. I need something that I could use to apply for a job. It didn’t matter anymore what card it was” (Ah-Pha, personal interview 25 February 2009). Ah-Pha is now working as a driver in Su-ngai Kolok, Narathivas province. He had been working there for 5 years.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Ah-Pha’s family had joined the government surveys of highlanders in 1991. His parents did not try to acquire Thai nationality for him until he finished Mattayom 3. In 2000, his parent submitted a request for acquiring Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 *bis.* by the assistance of the village chief. Years passed by, there was never a progress of the request.

It was until 2005 that Ah-Pha learned that he did not have the right Thai nationality. It was marked in the Highland People Personal Record document his family got from the survey in 1991 that he was born in Myanmar, which was not true. At that

time, Ah-Pha was hopeless in acquiring Thai nationality. He moved on his life by taking the migrant identification card in order to use it to find a job. It was his uncle who told him that there might be a way. He knew the people who could help correcting the document. In 2006, Ah-Pha was told by his uncle to go to Mae Chan Administrative Office and submit another request form for acquiring Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 *bis*.

Ah-Pha was asked to provide a number of people who witnessed his birth in Thailand. The process of document correction took him 6 months. After the document was corrected, he can submit the request to acquire Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 *bis*. He had to come for more investigation regarding acquiring Thai nationality. All the processes were complete 3 months after that. Ah-Pha said he paid his uncle 40,000 Bht for the help. The officer told him to wait.

Years passed by, there was not a new from the District Office. In 2008, while he was working in Narathivas, his father called him from Chiang Rai telling him that he heard that there was a new nationality law passed. A lot of people in the village were submitting the request according to this law. Ah-Pha rushed home and came to the District Office to ask about it. He was suggested to submit a new request form to acquire Thai nationality according to Section 23 of Nationality Act 1965 as amended in 2008. He submitted the request form with the same evidence. Ah-Pha's was approved Thai nationality before the end of the year 2008.

5.4.9 "Bajor"

<i>Age:</i>	39	<i>Sex:</i>	Male
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Single
<i>Education:</i>	P. 6	<i>Occupation:</i>	Farmer, raises cattle
<i>District:</i>	Mae Fa Luang		
<i>Interview date:</i>	12 February 2009		
<i>Year started obtaining process:</i>	2005		
<i>Year submitted the first request:</i>	2005		
<i>Year submitted the last request:</i>	2008		

Year granted Thai nationality: 2008

Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)

Family background and life story:

Bajor was born and grown up in a village in Amphoe Mae Fa Luang, Chiang Rai. He was one of the 4 children of an indigenous hill tribe couple. The cause of statelessness in Bajor's case is that he was not in the village when his family was notified the approval. So he did not go to the local registration office to complete the process of making Thai ID cards in time.

Bajor was not a typical Akha. Instead of living in his hometown and farming for a living like other Akhas, he searched for a new better life. With some other men in the village, he fled to Pattani, a southern province of Thailand to find a job around 20 years ago (1988). He worked there for around 16-17 years, starting from a low-paid job in small restaurants. His friendly and confident personality finally got him the job as a waiter in a small hotel, which was his last job in Pattani. Without Thai nationality identification card, he had to fake his identity to get jobs. He came back to live in Chiang Rai permanently in 2006 because of realizing that he had got HIV-AIDS.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Bajor's family was registered in the government's survey of highland population in 1991. His sisters and brother has been granted Thai nationality for around fifteen years ago according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Nationality of Hill Tribe People B. E. 2535 (C.E. 1992). The family had to wait for many years since the survey before the local registration office informed the whole family the approval to be Thai nationals. Unfortunately, Bajor was working away in Pattani at that time. His family had no way to contact him because communication technology was not as advanced as in nowadays. Moreover, the family did not know exactly where Bajor lived. Bajor only had a chance to come home every 2-3 years and stayed with the family for a few weeks in each time. Although he realized that he was

the only one who still lacked Thai nationality in the family, he did not have enough time to solve the problem.

“I was born-Thai but I had to live like an alien for so long. I was often arrested by the police at Mae Chan check point¹ on the way back home for staying outside the permission area longer than I was allowed. Sometimes they arrested me and charged me an illegal migrant. I was not afraid of being arrested. I know the police would not kill me. I just felt humiliated and ashamed” (Bajor, focus group discussion, 12 February 2009).

As soon as coming back to Chiang Rai in 2005, he started the process to obtain Thai nationality. Bajor firstly submitted the evidence to request for Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000) in 2006. Bajor did not get any news about his request from the district ever since. All he could do was trying to follow up with the village chief but never got a clear answer. At the end of the year 2006, the Assistant District Chief (Nai Amphoe) visited his village. All the villagers were there. Bajor did something that made everyone there turned to stare at him. He said, “I prostrated him at his feet and asked him when he would approve my request. He just turned away”(Ibid.).

He had received assistance from the MF in submitting the evidence to request for Thai nationality again in 2008. His request was finally approved in 2008. He had lived as a stateless person for 38 years by the time became fully Thai.

5.4.10 “Yapa”

<i>Age:</i>	25	<i>Sex:</i>	Male
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Married
<i>Education:</i>	P. 6	<i>Occupation:</i>	Farmer, raises cattle
<i>District:</i>	Mae Fa Luang		

¹ Checkpoints along the main roads to one of northern Thai provinces such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son are normal. In order to travel across districts or provincial areas, domestic mass transportation buses usually have to stop at least at one of the checkpoints. Then the police will ask people to show their identification cards; ex., Thai national identification cards, identification cards for non-Thais, identification card for legal migrants, etc. Hill tribes and minorities also need to show their travel permission document. Those who can not provide the cards or permission documents are asked to get down from the bus. Some were sent home. Some were asked to pay a fine.

Interview date: 12 February 2009

Year started obtaining process: 2004

Year submitted the first request: 2004

Year submitted the last request: 2004

Year granted Thai nationality: 2006

Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)

Family background and life story:

Yapa is a 25 years-old modern-looking Aka woman. Without talking to her, one cannot distinguish her from normal Thai girls. She was born in the remote area of Mae Fa Luang District. The word ‘nationality’ was mentioned very often among the people in her village as an important thing that every hill tribe people want. She learned that she did not have ‘Thai nationality’ when she was in a primary school. However, she did not realize the importance of Thai nationality until when she was old enough to apply for a job and to travel.

“When I applied for a job, the employers always asked if I had Thai national identification card. It was hard to get a job for stateless people like us. Even though I was accepted, the payment was lower than other girls who were Thai nationals. I wanted to work in Bangkok with my sister, but it was not possible. When I wanted to go out of Mae Fa Luang, I had to ask for permission. Sometimes I had to sneak out because it was not comfortable to go to the district administration office every time. Once I went to Bangkok to visit and stay with my sister who worked there. On the way home, I was caught by the police at Mae Chan checkpoint and was forced to pay 4000 Baht for staying out longer than in the permission. All I could do was crying. I was only 16 at that time. It was so embarrassing” (Yapa, focus group discussion, 12 February 2009).

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Yapa and her family were registered in the hill tribe population’s personal survey in 1991. The family tried to get Thai nationality for a long time ago.

“Ever since I remember, my family had submitted the requests for so many times but we had never been successful. Years by years, there were village chiefs after village chiefs, who said they would help but nothing happened” (Ibid.).

Until now, the whole family is still stateless except Yapa. With the assistance of her Thai national boyfriend, Yapa and her family submitted the request to acquire Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000 in 2004. In 2005, she got married to the man. At that time he was the village chief. He pressured the Assistant District Chief to approve his wife’s request for Thai nationality.

“When the ADC came as a guest of honor in our wedding, I asked him to approve Yapa’s request as well as of the whole family. I told him that it was a shame if the village chief’s wife was a stateless person. He promised to do it as soon as possible. For six months that I tried to follow up the case, there was not a progress. I went there for the last time. Then I told the ADC that I would resign from the village chief position if he did not approve my wife’s request” (Chart, focus group discussion, 12 February 2009).

A week later, Yapa was called by the district administration office for make Thai national card. She was granted Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000) in 2006, which granted Thai nationality to people who were proved to be indigenous Thais. Under this regulation, Yapa has proved that she was an indigenous Thai, which means that her parents and other members in the family are also indigenous Thai. However, the rest members in the family were left to be stateless until now.

5.4.11 “Mata”

<i>Age:</i>	52	<i>Sex:</i>	Male
<i>Ethnicity:</i>	Akha	<i>Marital status:</i>	Married
<i>Education:</i>	-	<i>Occupation:</i>	Farmer, raises cattle
<i>District:</i>	Mae Fa Luang		
<i>Interview date:</i>	12 February 2009		
<i>Year started obtaining process:</i>	1991		
<i>Year submitted the first request:</i>	1992		

Year submitted the last request: 2008

Year granted Thai nationality: 2008

Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)

Family background and life story:

Mata had lived in a hill tribe village in Mae Chan District since he was born until eleven years ago. He moved to live closer to his relatives in another village which was separated from Mae Chan and became Mae Fa Luang District. Mata never went to school. He could not read or write Thai but he learned to speak northern Thai dialect by himself. All his life, he dreamt to become a Thai national. For him, Thai nationality would be a passport to more opportunities in life.

“I wanted to travel. I wanted to see the way people work in their farms to improve my own farm. If I was granted Thai national when I was younger, I would become something other than I am today. If people could drive a car, I would be able to. If they could build a building, I would be able to” (Mata, personal interview, 12 February 2009).

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

It was almost twenty years ago when Mata firstly submitted evidence in requesting for Thai nationality. The village chief assisted him to Mae Chan District administration office. Mata was requested by the village chief to pay around 30,000 baht for the assistance. It was all of his saving money and the money he had got from selling his pigs. After submitting the evidence, he tried to follow up the request but the only answer he received from the village chief and the district administration office was “just wait”. After that, he submitted the request for several more times, but never got anything back.

Mata and his family were registered in the hill tribe population survey in 1991. His children had got Thai nationality in 2005. They did not have the same problem because it was said in the personal records that they and their parents were born and live in Thailand since born. So they are assumed to be indigenous Thais and were granted

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION WORKERS

Background of the organization

1. Please describe your organization's background in short.
2. Please describe the work of your organization in relation to solving citizenship problem.

Work regarding stateless people in obtaining nationality

3. Please describe how your organization assisted the villagers in obtaining nationality.

Problems and needs in obtaining Thai nationality process

Getting and passing information

4. Where did you normally get information on obtaining Thai nationality?
5. What kind of information the villagers usually need in obtaining Thai nationality?
6. How did you inform the villagers about news regarding obtaining nationality?
7. Do you think the current methods used in passing the information are effective? Why?
8. Did the villagers have to pay for any services or fees relating to getting the information? If yes, how much and to whom?
9. Did you find any difficulties in getting the information the stateless person need in obtaining Thai nationality? If yes, what were they?
10. Did you find any difficulties in passing the information to the stateless person? If yes, what were they?

Preparing evidence – document and person

11. Did you help the villagers to prepare evidence for obtaining Thai nationality? If yes, how?
12. Were there any difficulties the villagers usually found in collecting or preparing the required documents? If yes, what were they?
13. Did you find any difficulties in helping the villagers to prepare evidence for obtaining nationality? If yes, what were they?
14. Did the villagers have to pay for any services or fees relating to preparing evidence? If yes, how much and to whom?
15. In your opinion, what kind of assistance the villagers would need in evidence preparation?
16. Document submission to district registration office

Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000).

Mata had lived without Thai nationality for 51 years and received assistance in obtaining Thai nationality from the MF. His request to be Thai has just been approved in January 2009 according to Reg. 2000. He said, "If there was not assistance from the Mirror Foundation, I would have still been stateless until now. I have lost my faith to become Thai national before I die" (Ibid.).

5.4.12 "Buya"

Age: 32 *Sex:* Female
Ethnicity: Akha *Marital status:* Married
Education: - *Occupation:* Farmer, raises cattle
District: Mae Fa Luang
Interview date: 12 February 2009
Year started obtaining process: 2005
Year submitted the first request: 2005
Year submitted the last request: 2006
Year granted Thai nationality: 2006
Channel in obtaining Thai nationality: Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000)

Family background and life story:

Buya was born in a remote area of Mae Fa Luang District. She is the first child and also the first person in the family who got Thai nationality. At first glance, she looked just like a typical Akha woman. Dressed in a robe and did not speak Thai, she was holding her son in her arms almost all the time when we talked. However, it was found later that she was quite tough for an Akha woman. She alone traveled to the south of Thailand and worked in a rubber plantation for many years. It was noticeable from her responses that she could understand Thai quite well. It might be because she had worked

with Thai people in the south for many years. However, she preferred using Akha language to tell her story.

Buya was married to a Thai national man 5 years ago. It's her husband's brother in law who helped her all the way to get Thai nationality. Her motivation to succeed in acquiring Thai nationality is freedom to travel and working opportunities. She had to travel to the south every year to work and it was not convenient to ask for permission. She said she had to work in the south for 5-6 months a year but the authority usually did not grant the permission to stay out of the area for that long.

Story of obtaining Thai nationality:

Buya's path through acquiring Thai nationality was similar to others. It was not easy and took a long time. She knew that her family had submitted the evidence to acquire Thai nationality for several times, the first time was since she was young. However, the family had never been successful. Finally, she determined to do it on her own. She felt more confidence when her husband's family was willing to help her. In 2005, she came back to Chiang Rai with her husband's brother in law. They headed to Mae Fa Luang District administration office for advice on evidence and process in acquiring Thai nationality. To follow the advice of the officers, she submitted a request for Thai nationality according to Sect. 7 bis. with document evidence. A year passed by, her request was still on processed, according to district administration officers.

In 2006, she had got a good advice from a relative who was a village chief in another village. He told her that she was an indigenous Thai so she had the right to be Thai since birth. He suggested her to cancel the first request and start a new request for Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Status of Highlanders B.E. 2543 (C.E. 2000). That case, the government could not withdraw her nationality. Buya said she did not understand why the district administration officer did not suggest her to acquire Thai nationality according to Reg. 2000 since the first time she asked for their advice. She did not complain to the office but cancelled the first request and started the new request. This time she learned to go straight to the Assistant District Chief.

“I was asked to pay 2,000 baht to the ADC Officer and another 2,000 baht to the village chief when I went to submit the request. I did. Almost a year later, I was called for Thai nationality identification card making. It was amazing”(Buya, personal interview, 12 February 2009).

In 2004, Buya went to the district administration office to make a Thai ID card. There, she was asked to pay 2,000 baht more to the ADC and 2,000 baht to the village chief. She also had to take them to dinner that evening which cost her around 2,000 baht. Buya said she had spent around 15,000 baht in total for obtaining Thai nationality. She knew from other villagers that she may need to pay authorized people to get Thai nationality. Her husband had prepared for it by borrowing the money from friends. However, she thought it was worth. After she was granted Thai nationality, she could travel freely and she could get more money from work. All the debt was now paid.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter provides basic information on Chiang Rai Province and the three selected districts where this research was conducted as well as the background of the 12 selected former stateless people who are all hill tribe people. Chiang Rai, as one of highland provinces where a large amount of hill people reside, is a place where minorities face the problem of statelessness,

Based on the backgrounds of the selected former stateless people, most of them were granted Thai nationality according to the Regulation of Central Registration Bureau Regarding Personal Legal Status of Highlanders. The rest were granted Thai nationality according to Section 23 of Nationality Act B.E. 1965 (C.E. 2508) as amended in B.E. 2551 (C.E. 2008). Among the group of people interviewed, seven of them were assisted by the Mirror Foundation in obtaining Thai nationality. The interviewees have gone through many years of difficulty resulting from their statelessness. Their paths to Thai nationality are long and bumpy due to many factors. Some of them have to pay a lot of money and receive nothing in return.