

## Seniors know their rights and fulfil their dreams in Thailand

- By EU Delegation to Thailand and HelpAge International, [European Union](#)

Fulfilling the dreams of older people requires specific support from society and institutions, especially the economic and health sectors. Fulfilling those dreams also requires knowledge about older people's rights. An EU supported project, that is building capacities for promoting older people's rights and income security, implemented by the Foundation for Older Persons' Development and HelpAge International, is helping to fulfil these dreams in Thailand.

If people are not aware of their rights, they cannot demand these rights through legally established processes and institutions.

In cooperation with the Older People's Group (OPG) in Banthi District, Lamphun Province, the project organised a team of volunteers called 'older people's rights promotion volunteer team of Banthi'. The team is working to increase knowledge about older people's rights and to encourage, monitor and protect those rights. The volunteer team also works with government agencies in 10 pilot areas to raise their awareness about the rights of older people and their duties to protect and promote these rights.

Mae Janfong Maha-mai is the president of the volunteer team. 'Gathering a strong group of older people brought us the power of negotiation with key organisations such as municipal offices', she said. Workshop-style meetings were held in various villages to educate older people about 13 critical rights and entitlements for older people in accordance with Thailand's Older Persons Act 2003. The workshops also helped to strengthen Older People's Groups, placing them as invaluable sources of knowledge on the issues that affect their lives and their communities.

In the past, older people lacked useful knowledge and information that could assist their daily lives, especially knowledge of their rights. This meant a lack of knowledge around access to health services and access to the Elderly Fund provided by the government, among other important issues.

The Older Persons Act was a start but there is still a gap between the act and its implementation.

Since the volunteer team was established a few years ago, Mae Janfong Maha-mai and her Banthi OPG team have been distributing information at monthly meetings, covering topics related to the rights and services available for elderly people. They also raise the awareness of the public at large.

Realising and being able to access their rights brings an important change for older people, such as access to comprehensive healthcare. For example, they can request shorter waiting times to visit a doctor.

'I would like to make organisations aware of older people's rights so that the elderly can access all their benefits and make us visible in society', said Mae Janfong Mahamai.

**Originally published:**

*<https://europa.eu/eyd2015/en/european-union/stories/week-50-seniors-know-their-rights-and-fulfil-their-dreams-thailand>*