

Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model

LESSONS LEARNED: INSIGHTS AND PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

23 NOVEMBER 2023



ThaiWISE
HELA MÄNNISKAN I MALMÖ



Contents

The purpose of this document	1
Introduction to ThaiWISE	1
Background: why our certification programme is necessary	3
Certification programme: an overview	6
Piloting the certification programme: project process	9
Stakeholders	16
Results	19
Lessons learned: summary	21
Next steps	22
Replication of the certification programme	24
With thanks	24
Final note	25

The purpose of this document

In this document we will outline the process of starting and operating the Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model.

We will share the lessons we have learned so that future iterations of this programme can benefit from our experience in Malmö.

Introduction to ThaiWISE

Thai Women in Sweden Empowerment (ThaiWISE) is a collaboration between Hela Människan i Malmö and the Malmö Municipality.

The collaboration is an 'Idéburet Offentligt Partnerskap' (IOP) which is scheduled to continue until 2025, with tentative plans for extension.

ThaiWISE aims to reduce exploitation and abuse of Thai women in Sweden, with a particular focus on those working in the Thai massage industry.

We focus on empowering women with information and skills that enabling them to make positive changes in their private and professional lives.

- 2017 Noomi – Hela Människan i Malmö began outreach work to help Thai women working in massage salons.
- 2019 The pilot of ThaiWISE – Hela Människan i Malmö was founded to address the systemic issues faced by Thai women, particularly those in the massage industry.
- 2021 Our certification programme was founded to promote ethical practices in the Thai massage industry with 9 Malmö salons selected to pilot the initiative.
- 2023 Nuad Thai Nordic, our network of certified salons, was launched.



Hela Människan i Malmö is a Christian organisation, with branches in more than 60 locations in Sweden. It works to address social issues faced by vulnerable groups in society.

Idéburet Offentligt Partnerskap

An IOP is a specific form of agreement used between municipalities and not-for-profit organisations to jointly address a social problem. It enables the not-for-profit partner to effectively plan and implement long-term strategies.

Financial support

ThaiWISE's work is funded by:

- ✧ Malmö Municipality (Malmö Stad)
- ✧ The Royal Thai Embassy Stockholm
- ✧ The National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen)
- ✧ The Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten)

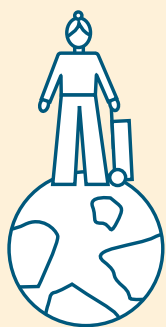
NUAD THAI
=
THAI MASSAGE



The four components of ThaiWISE's work: prevention, protection, professionalism, and policy

Prevention

ThaiWISE works with the Swedish Embassy in Thailand to reduce the risks for Thai women who plan to immigrate or have recently immigrated to Sweden.



We offer an online course in Civic Orientation to help them integrate Thai people into Swedish society, and ongoing activities to give them the knowledge they need to live and work in Sweden.

Professionalism

ThaiWISE aims to raise the standards of Thai massage in Sweden. In 2021 we initiated our certification programme, which will be discussed in detail in this document.



In 2023 we opened the Nuad Thai Nordic Training & Certification Center, which includes our flagship massage salon.

Protection

The ThaiWISE Call Center provides information, counselling, and guidance to Thai people in Sweden.

Over 95% of callers are female, and many are victims of domestic violence. We counsel callers and connect them to support and government agencies.



Policy

We conduct research on the situation of Thai women in Sweden and channel their voices to authorities. We raise awareness of their needs amongst policy makers.



Professionalism

A key component of our work to elevate professionalism amongst Thai women is our Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model, which was developed in partnership with the Malmö Municipality.

Our long-term vision is to see this programme replicated in all major cities in Sweden and its neighbouring countries.

This document outlines the process of developing our certification programme and shares the valuable lessons we have learned.

The Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model will be referred to as the "certification programme" in the remainder of this document.

Background: why our certification programme is necessary

Nuad Thai salons can be found in over 145 countries around the world¹. Unfortunately, many salons are not managed ethically or professionally and Nuad Thai has developed a controversial reputation, being associated with prostitution and human trafficking.

Enforced closure of illegal salons is, at best, a short-term solution, as the salon owner generally starts another salon using the same illegal business model.

80% of Thai massage salons in Sweden are not operated ethically. The women who work there are exploited and powerless to change their situation.

In 2019 Noomi - Hela Människan i Malmö conducted a study of Thai massage in Sweden (primarily focused on Malmö and including data from Gothenburg and Stockholm).²

Thai massage, known in Thailand as 'Nuad Thai', is a non-medicinal therapy which involves bodily manipulation to rebalance the recipient's body, and relieve stress and pain. In 2019, Nuad Thai was recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This study showed that there are over 1,000 massage salons in Sweden with approximately 3,000 female workers. Around 80% of these salons engage in illicit or unethical activities, including human trafficking, labour exploitation, and sexual exploitation. ThaiWISE was created to address these issues.

These problems are not limited to Sweden. Similar issues have been uncovered in Norway, Denmark, and Finland.^{3,4} Many women in the Thai Massage industry travel within these countries and continental Europe, facing exploitation and the risk of trafficking.

ThaiWISE has identified the following contributing factors:

1

Many Thai women have limited knowledge of their rights and the services available to them in Sweden.

2

The majority of Thai women in the massage business have limited knowledge of the responsibilities of a business owner in Sweden.

3

Many Thai women have limited knowledge of the Swedish language which makes them vulnerable.

4

Many Thai women are under pressure to financially support their family in Thailand and view prostitution as the best way to earn money for this purpose.

5

There is a power imbalance between many Thai women and their partners who, in general, control the couple's finances.

6

There is little incentive to change to more ethical business practices.

7

Many salon owners who do want to operate ethically are unsure of the relevant laws and struggle to access necessary information.

8

Thai massage has a negative reputation and customers do not demand higher standards.

Addressing the factors causing vulnerability: ThaiWISE's strategies

1

Many Thai women have limited knowledge of their rights and the services available to them.



Information and orientation: ThaiWISE offers Civic Orientation and Civic Information courses and regular online activities that provide Thai people with information about Swedish society and the services that are available. The ThaiWISE Call Center is available to answer questions and provide support.

2

The majority of Thai women in the massage industry have limited knowledge of the responsibilities of a business owner in Sweden.



Knowledge and skill-building: ThaiWISE's offers a Business Management course (taught by expert organisations NyföretagarCentrum and LEVEL, Malmö) that covers the legal requirements of a business owner.

3

Many Thai women have limited knowledge of the Swedish language which makes them vulnerable.



Support and tailored language classes: ThaiWISE works with Hyllie Park Folkhögskola to run a Swedish language course (SFI) specifically for Thai people, at a time when salon owners are able to attend. We assist Thai people with enrolment and information about effective study techniques. We also run an online language course specifically for women working in massage.

4

Many Thai women are under pressure to financially support their family in Thailand and view sexual services as the best way to earn money for this purpose.



Information and options: Through our Civic Orientation course, workshops and outreach activities ThaiWISE informs Thai women about educational opportunities, the Swedish job market and the social and financial support that is available. When Thai women are aware of the possibilities available to them, the pressure to work at unfair and exploitative workplaces is reduced.

ThaiWISE's certification programme supports the owners and managers of Thai massage salons to use a business model that is both ethical and financially successful.

5

There is a power imbalance between Thai women and their partners. In general, the Swedish partner controls the couple's finances. Many Thai salons are financed and controlled by a Thai woman's partner.



Strengthening autonomy: ThaiWISE's Civic Orientation course, ongoing workshops and outreach activities inform Thai women about Swedish society. By giving women information about the supportive services available, we enable them to make informed choices and consider leaving abusive relationships.

6

There is little incentive to change to more ethical business practices. An illegal salon is profitable (some salon owners see an illegal business as more profitable than a legal business) and the 20% of business owners who operate ethically are not recognised or rewarded for their choice.



Recognition and inspiration: ThaiWISE's certification programme recognises ethically run salons and associates them with respected organisations such as the Royal Thai Embassy, their local municipality, and Swedish authorities. Certified salons benefit from promotions and public recognition and form a supportive community. The 80% of salons who are operating illegally can see a viable alternative and it is expected that the number of ethical salons will gradually increase.

7

Many salon owners who do want to operate ethically are unsure of the relevant laws and struggle to access necessary information.



Supporting ethical transition: We provide information via workshops, our Call Center and the Business Management training and coaching that are included in our certification programme.

ThaiWISE positions itself as a non-judgemental ally, making salon owners comfortable asking for information about regulations and support to make positive changes in their business

8

Thai massage suffers from a negative reputation and there is widespread stigmatization of Thai massage therapists as sex workers. Massage customers do not demand higher standards.



Elevating Nuad Thai's image: ThaiWISE works to improve both the standards and the public image of Nuad Thai. By raising awareness through public relations and social media, we educate the public about the value of professional Nuad Thai. As we raise awareness, customers will start to demand higher quality massage services, will choose ethically certified salons, and feel safer as clients of a Thai massage salon.

Certification programme: an overview

The Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model certifies massage salons that are run according to our definition of an ethical salon.

After certification, salons are welcomed into Nuad Thai Nordic, our network of certified salons.

Although our certification programme focuses on massage salons, it also addresses the broader needs of Thai women in Sweden.

We empower Thai women in massage by making them aware of their rights and responsibilities in Sweden and the support that is available, and through networking activities that give them peer support from other ethical salon owners.

Our programme strengthens the position of Thai women in society, reducing their vulnerability and addressing the power imbalance that often exists between Thai women and their Swedish partners, while maintaining a positive relationship with Swedish men.



Pre-requisites

To participate in the certification programme, the applicant must:

1. have a work permit or be a resident or citizen of Sweden
2. be the owner, co-owner, or manager of a salon
3. agree and comply with the code of ethics set by the programme
4. be free from criminal record or negative business records
5. have completed the required 150 hours training in Nuad Thai, resulting in a certificate from the Thai government

Ethical massage salons: ThaiWISE's definition

Legal compliance:

- ✧ Follows all Swedish business laws and regulations
- ✧ Meets all legal requirements for massage salon operations

Ethical employment:

- ✧ Provides fair, safe, and legal working conditions for all employees

Professional services:

- ✧ Offers legal, safe, and appropriate massage services
- ✧ Employs qualified massage therapists trained in the services they provide
- ✧ Maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy for prostitution

Ownership and management:

- ✧ Is owned, co-owned, or managed by a massage therapist who has completed the 150-hour training required by Thai authorities

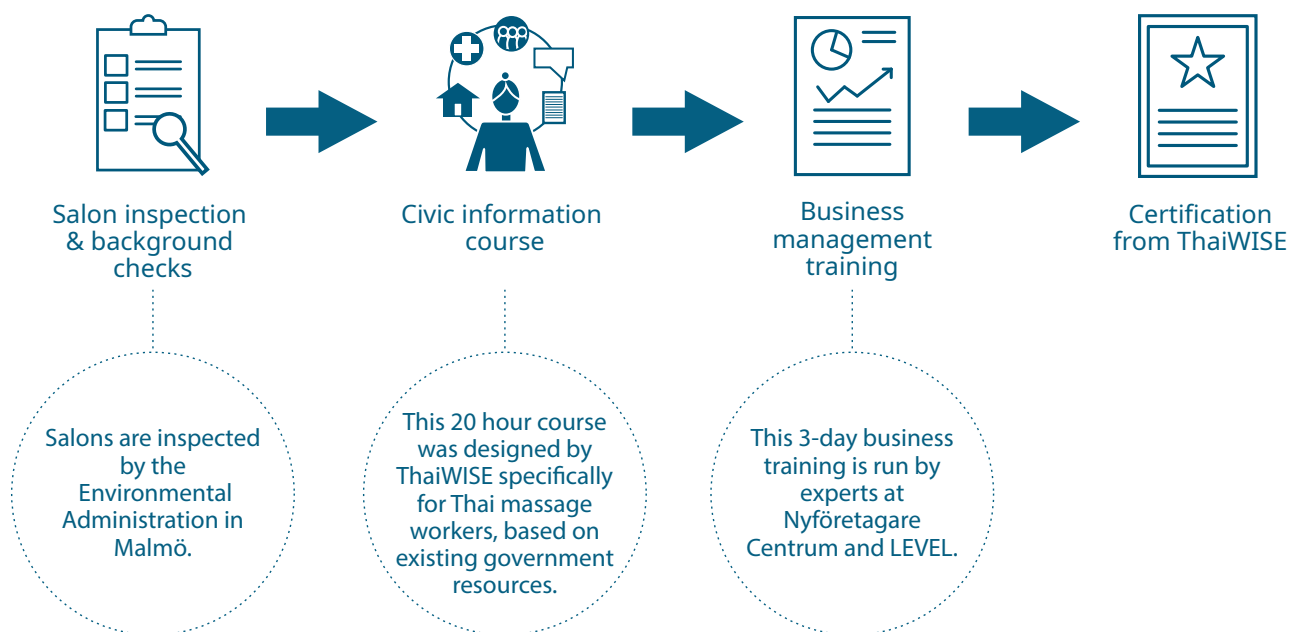
Honest marketing:

- ✧ Uses truthful and transparent marketing practices
- ✧ Practices anti-discriminatory treatment of customers and staff

Certification process

Pre-requisite for application: a successful inspection by the Environmental Administration (Miljöförvaltningen).

Miljöförvaltningen, a sub-division of the Malmö Municipality, is responsible for inspecting businesses, including massage salons, in Malmö. In this document we will use the English name: Environmental Administration.



Civic Information: 20 hours

This short online course aims to equip participants with basic knowledge about Swedish society, the services that exist and their rights and responsibilities as residents.

This course was developed from an existing Civic Orientation course and tailored to meet the specific needs of Thai women in Sweden. It is delivered by ThaiWISE. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate from the Malmö Municipality.

Business Management: 3 days

This training helps salon owners understand the rules and regulations that they need to know in order to operate a business. This is delivered by external experts.

In Malmö we collaborated with NyföretagarCentrum, and in the future will collaborate with LEVEL. Upon completion, participants receive a certificate from ThaiWISE and NyföretagarCentrum or LEVEL.

The certification programme does not include massage training. If the participant has not completed the Thai government's official massage training, they can pay to do this through ThaiWISE or an approved organisation in Thailand.

LESSON LEARNED: it is best to begin with a short course, and support the participants with additional ongoing workshops and access to individual coaching. In the future the initial business training will be 10 - 15 hours.

Benefits to salons

ThaiWISE works actively to promote certified salons, individually and collectively. As awareness of the certification programme grows, certified salons will automatically reap the benefits as more customers choose ethically certified salons.

Certified salons receive additional benefits and advantages, for example, free access to training and activities through ThaiWISE and its partners NyföretagarCentrum and LEVEL.

Certified salons can access help on a variety of topics related to entrepreneurship such as marketing, business models, pricing strategies, employment contracts, and much more.



ThaiWISE team members and massage therapists from Ayurvedic Nuad Thai promoting our certification programme at an expo.

LESSON LEARNED:

Salon owners need to be able to clearly see the benefit of becoming certified. This will probably become easier as the programme becomes more well-known and certified salons are seen to be successful.

Raising awareness



As well as improving the standards of individual salons, we are working to improve the image of Thai massage. Swedish massage clients and the general public are informed about the certification programme and introduced to the certification logo via social media, advertising, and public relations.

Eventually, customers will learn to recognise our logo, and feel safe choosing certified Nuad Thai.



LESSON LEARNED:

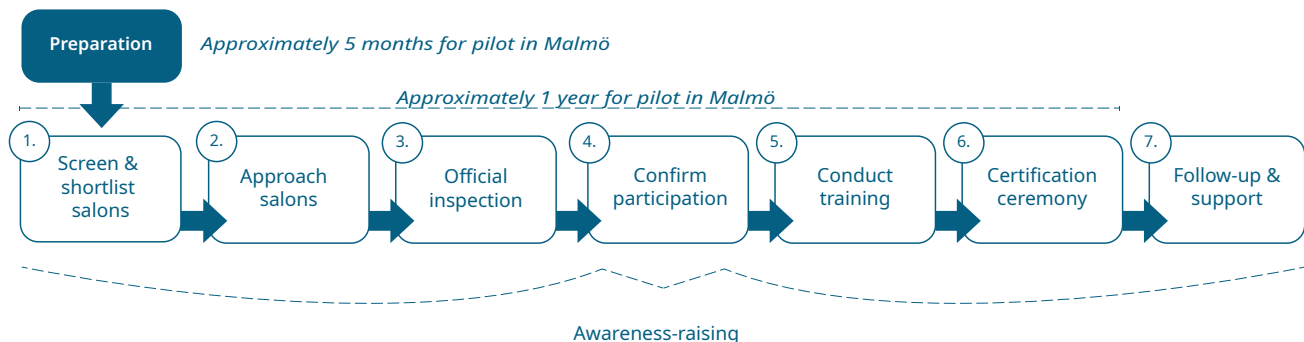
The certificate and information aimed at customers are important tools for our members. Salon owners use them to explain to customers that their salon does not offer unethical services.

After becoming certified, less men ask us for happy ending. When they do ask, I point to the certificate on the wall and say "can't you see that this is a professional salon supported by Malmö Municipality? You will not find happy ending here." It works very well. In the past men would continue to ask, but now they leave without hassling me.

Pannee Puriso Sundmark
Khun Nee Thaimassage

Piloting the certification programme: process

Preparation



Before launching the programme, we:

- ✧ conducted evidence-based research in Malmö, including personally visiting a representative sample of salons
- ✧ identified relevant stakeholders and secured partnerships
- ✧ defined an ethically run Thai massage salon
- ✧ developed standards and tools including a code of conduct, selection criteria to use when shortlisting salons (see page ten) and check-lists for approval (for example, the minimum standards required by the Environmental Administration)
- ✧ developed training curriculum
- ✧ created marketing tools such as a website, Facebook page and brochures

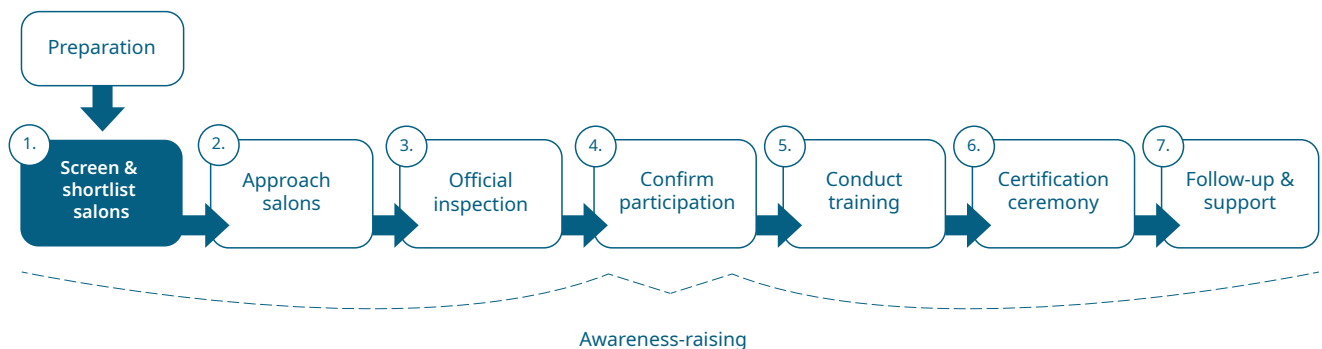
LESSON LEARNED:

Our extensive research and on-going contact with our target group gave us vital information that enabled us to tailor this programme to their needs. It also meant that when the programme was launched, many of the salon owners were already engaged.

This report documents the pilot phase of the project. In the future, project time lines will be significantly reduced. As we expand the certification program to new cities, the initial preparation phase will be considerably shorter due to the foundational work completed in Malmö.

Given the growing familiarity of Thai women with our work, the process of engaging and gaining the trust of salon owners has become more efficient, taking approximately five months instead of a year.

1. Screening and shortlisting salons

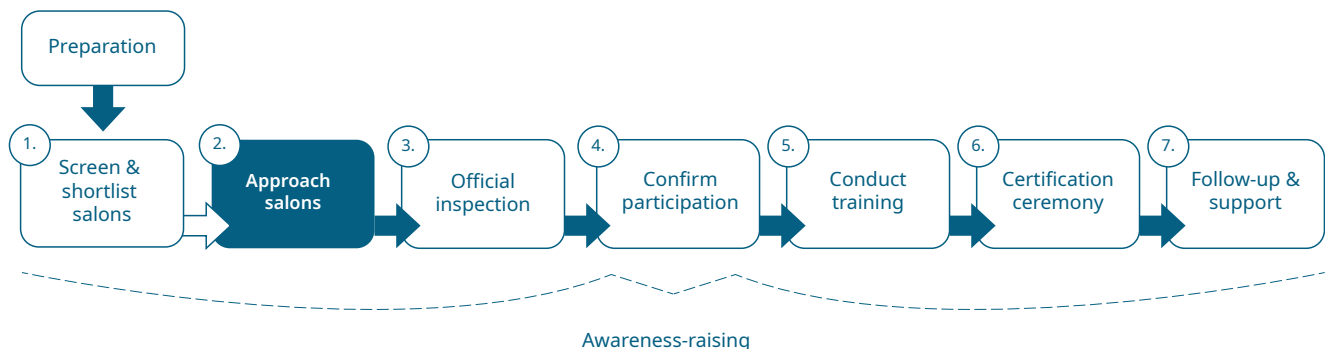


In the pilot phase of the programme, we focused on salon owners who were already operating their business with a reasonable standard of ethics: no records of human trafficking, prostitution or other criminal behaviour.

As a result of our research in 2019, we had a list of all the Thai massage salons in Malmö. We consulted Thai community members, a local Thai association, and the Environmental Administration to update this list and make a short-list of salons with good records.

During the first round of the certification programme, we decided to have a certain degree of tolerance. For example, many salons were operating ethically apart from lacking official contracts for employees. Because our programme supports them making the changes needed to become a fully ethical salon, we allowed them to apply despite some shortcomings.

2. Approaching salons



We approach and invite salons to participate using the following process:

1. An introductory contact to introduce the program and book a meeting. In general, a phone call was the most effective way to reach salon owners.
2. A personal visit to the salon, during which we determined their standards and their interest in improving and becoming certified.

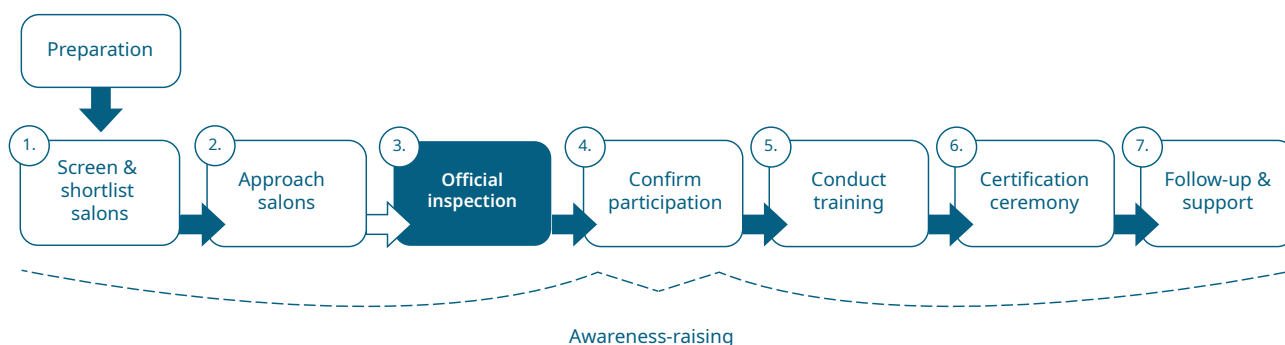
LESSON LEARNED:

Many Thai women were very suspicious of the programme and reluctant to be pioneer members. To overcome this in the future, we recommend inviting short-listed salons to a consultation workshop where they receive more information and have the opportunity to meet our current members. Their scepticism may make it difficult to convince them to attend a workshop, but this approach lowers the barrier to entry compared to a direct application process.



Project Manager Panadda Changmanee interviewing a potential applicant to the certification programme.

3. Official inspection



If the salon had not been inspected within the last three years, it was inspected by the Environmental Administration to ensure that it was operating according to the

required standards. This took place with permission from the salon owner (standard inspections by the Environmental Administration are done without notice).

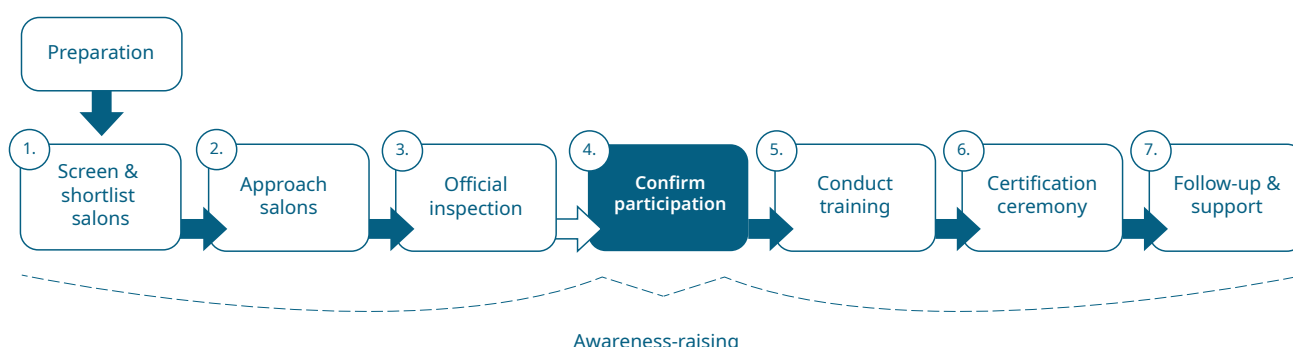
LESSON LEARNED:

Many Thai women are afraid that contact with the authorities will have negative consequences. Their fear is partially valid, as the inspector may impose fines, and will contact the property owner if there are problems with the venue. Property owners have been known to end their contract with salon owners, rather than addressing problems.

We informed salons that they will be inspected at some point, regardless of whether or not they are involved in our programme. This lessened the sense that ThaiWISE was responsible for any negative consequences of the inspection.

In some cases, salon owners did not understand that they had agreed to a formal inspection. Clear communication and written permission are important.

4. Confirmation of participation



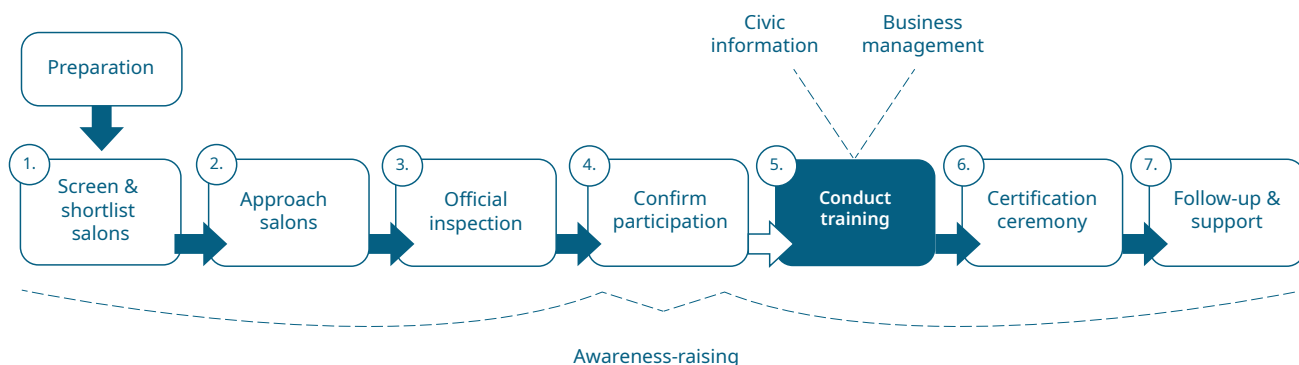
We confirmed participation via telephone.

LESSON LEARNED:

To aid clarity and understanding, we could ask applicants to sign a written consent form. We did not do this at this stage, as we suspected

that the formal consent form might deter some salons from participating. Participants signed this form during a training session.

5. Training



The training consists of two courses (see page seven for more detail):

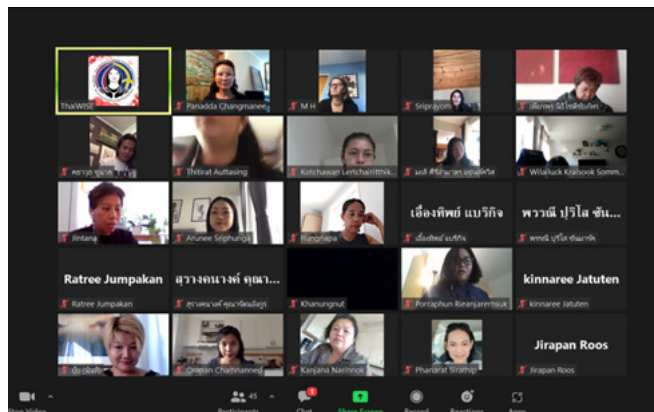
- ✧ Civic information training
- ✧ Business management training

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ◆ Many salon owners did not have sufficient training or official massage certification. The Nuad Thai training that we now offer was developed to address this need and allow Thai people to become officially certified Thai massage therapists without travelling to Thailand. This training is not included in the certification package. Applicants apply and pay separately.
- ◆ We have found that face-to-face training is much more effective than online training. It facilitates trust-building between ThaiWISE and participants, and gives salon owners a valuable opportunity to network with other owners who are interested in ethical business practices.
- ◆ Most salon owners work six days a week, and are unwilling to sacrifice their working hours to attend training. Since salons are usually closed for business on Sundays, our training been held on Sundays only. This limitation has slowed the overall progress of the programme.

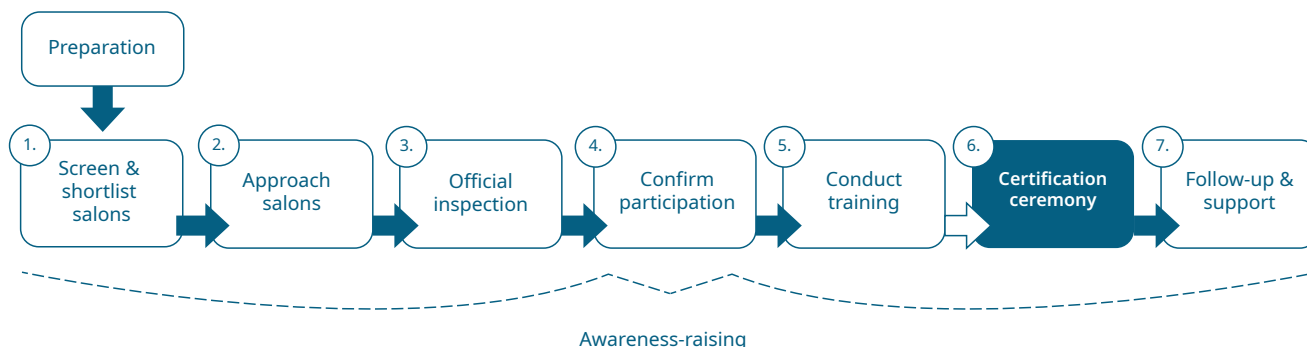


Business Management training at NyföretagarCentrum Östersund.



Online Civic Information training

6. Certification



We held a formal ceremony to confer certification upon new members. Attendees received certificates, Nuad Thai Certified logos for salon use, and informational materials to share with massage clients.

Existing members of the programme were invited to the ceremony, along with the Thai Ambassador, the Mayor/Chairman of the City Council, Malmö, Deputy Mayor for Labour Market and Social Services, Thai Women Network in Europe (TWNE), NyföretagarCentrum, interested business owners, Thai associations, and media.

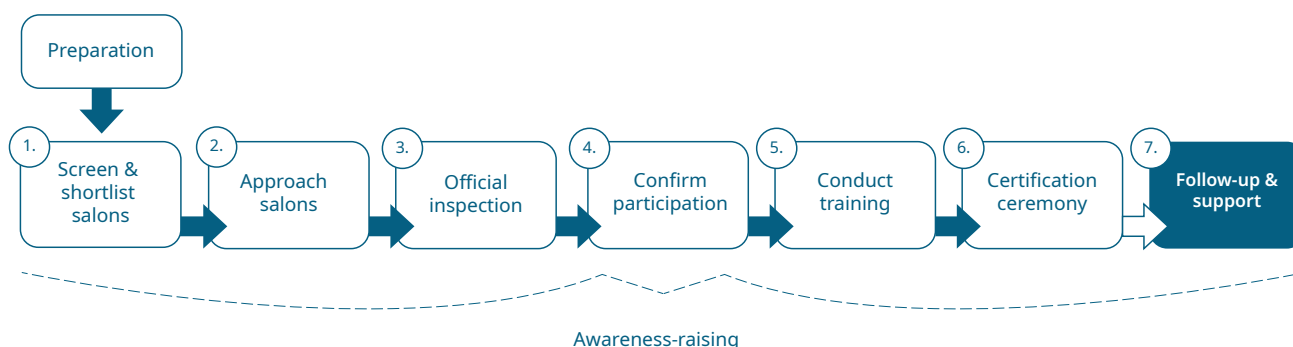


Participants and stakeholders at the certification ceremony on the 28th of November 2021.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ◆ The ceremony was an important part of the process. Successful participants told us that they felt appreciated, recognised and proud to be a role model for other women in the industry. Notably, they reported a shift from professional shame to pride. The involvement of the Thai government and embassy added significant meaning to the event.
- ◆ Recognition can spark jealousy from unethical salons. One of our certified salons was the target of vandalism, almost certainly from a rival salon. ThaiWISE's strategy is to avoid criticising unethical salons. Instead, we extend an invitation to these salons to seek assistance if needed.

7. Follow-up and support



We maintain relationships with newly certified salons to motivate them and to build on the skills they have learnt in the initial training.

Although it is possible for us to visit the salon to do personal follow-up, we rely on the relevant authorities to conduct official inspections as they see necessary.

Our support and follow-up techniques include:

1. Creating a community of member salons, where peer pressure and a sense of solidarity help salons to maintain ethical standards
 - ✧ Regular informal meetings with shared meals
 - ✧ Online chat group that celebrates achievements
2. Regular workshops on aspects of ethical business management
3. Needs assessment meeting with NyföretagarCentrum
4. A personal coach who creates a tailored business plan for the salon
5. Visits to the salon by ThaiWISE
6. Information from massage clients (who may report to ThaiWISE on their experience at a certified salon)
7. Information from authorities such as the Environmental Administration
8. Contact with local Thai organisations



Members meeting at the Nuad Thai Nordic Center, Malmö, for peer support

LESSON LEARNED:

Building trust with Thai women takes a long time. Initially, members were reluctant to attend our events. Now they actively request meetings.

As we build a sense of community, it vital that all members maintain high standards. Our members were insistent that they did not want to be associated with salons that did not operate ethically.

Interestingly, after two years their attitude has changed and rather than solely wanting distance from non-certified salons, many of our members express interest in helping others to make changes. Several of our members are planning to contact salons who could benefit from ThaiWISE's support.

Stakeholders

Creating helpful partnerships

Choosing the right partners was an essential part of the process. This section will document the roles and contributions of the stakeholders involved in the pilot certification programme, and provide insights on choosing the right stakeholders in new locations.

ThaiWISE positions itself as an **empowering ally** to women and salon owners. At the same time, we needed **credibility** that could only come from associating our programme with the relevant authorities. These two factors are key to understanding our choice of partners.

For example, we chose not to have an official collaboration with the anti-trafficking police, although their work is very relevant to ours. The police are seen by Thai women as a threatening, punitive organization, which is not congruent with our desire to be seen as a supportive ally.

We chose to collaborate with the Environmental Administration, which is seen by Thai women as being less threatening than many other authorities.

The Environmental Administration collaborates with other organisations such as the health department, the tax authority and the police, which means that ThaiWISE benefits from the information collected by many organisations, while being formally associated with only one.

The organisation mandated to inspect massage salons differs across various cities.

Partnering with NyföretagarCentrum and LEVEL gave us access to expertise that the ThaiWISE team members did not personally have. It also inspired trust in Thai women and made them more receptive to the content of the training.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- ◆ Plan to spend a significant amount of time educating authorities on the problems that Thai women face. Statistics and evidence-based research are important tools.
- ◆ The partnership between a civil society organisation (Hela Människan i Malmö) and the local municipality (Malmö) was an effective collaboration. The two organisations shared the same vision and a clearly defined goal. Hela Människan i Malmö contributed project management skills and a team with Thai backgrounds, while Malmö Municipality gave the programme credibility and access to other authorities.
- ◆ Building trust in the Thai community is crucial, but challenging. Engaging with respected and socially connected Thai individuals, such as those in associations or teaching roles, is an effective approach. It is essential that the ThaiWISE team is made up of Thai people.
- ◆ Our association with the Environmental Administration gave us credibility, and at the same time provoked suspicion, as some Thai women suspected ThaiWISE of being a spy for the authorities.

Stakeholders

Organisation or individual	Role	Benefits to programme
Hela Människan i Malmö: Christian organisation focused on social work to help vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseeing the project Administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project management skills Thai team members
Malmö Municipality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour Market and Social Services (Arbetsmarknads- och Socialförvaltningen) Environmental Administration (Miljöförvaltningen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor and Partner through a collaboration agreement, Idéburet offentligt partnerskap (IOP). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility amongst Thai women and general public. Credibility amongst other potential partners Access to networks Information Inspections of salons
Royal Thai Embassy in Stockholm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor and collaborator Co-host workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility amongst Thai women and general public Credibility amongst other potential partners International promotion
National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility amongst Thai women and general public
Swedish Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor during first two years of ThaiWISE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credibility amongst Thai women and general public
Thai women influencers in Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the ThaiWISE team, or actively engaged in our activities <p>https://www.thaiwise.se/about-thaiwise/our-colleagues/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead online activities and sections of our training Credibility amongst Thai women. Access to Thai women in Thailand Awareness-raising amongst Thai women Attracting followers to our social media channels Recruitment of volunteers
Thai team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language and cultural skills build trust
NyföretagarCentrum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise in business start-up and management
LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise in business start-up and management
Hyllie Park Folk High School (Hyllie Folkhögskola)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise in teaching Swedish as a second language Location for language classes

Steering committee

ThaiWISE is guided by a seven-person steering committee which meets regularly to monitor and plan the project's strategy. The committee's regular meetings enable an open line of communication between the Thai community and government officials.

The steering committee consists of representatives from:

- ✧ the Thai community in Malmö
- ✧ the Labour Market and Social Services, Malmö Municipality (Arbetsmarknads- och Socialförvaltningen)
- ✧ the Environmental Administration, Malmö Municipality (Miljöförvaltningen)
- ✧ Hyllie Park Folk High School (Hyllie Park Folkhögskolan)
- ✧ Upper Secondary School and Adult Education Department (Gymnasie- och vuxenutbildningsförvaltningen)
- ✧ Thai Women in Sweden Empowerment (ThaiWISE - Hela Människan i Malmö)



The steering committee meeting in May 2023 at the Nuad Thai Nordic Training & Certification Center.

Results

We consider the pilot to be successful!

- ✧ As of September 2023, there are nine certified salons in Malmö. All of our certified salons are still committed to our programme and continue to engage in our activities.
- ✧ The number of applicants to our programme is increasing.

- ✧ Salons from other cities have asked us to expand to their area.
- ✧ We have proved that it is possible to run an ethical Nuad Thai salon.
- ✧ We have begun the long-term work of changing the public image of Nuad Thai.

Key statistics

64,732

people reached via
Facebook activities
(2022)

181

people contacted the
Call Center (2022)

9

salons certified
members of Nuad Thai
Nordic (2023)



Participants of the Business management course, taught by NyföretagarCentrum, Östersund.

Nuad Thai Nordic pioneers: our first certified salons



Nuad Thai Nordic's flagship salon

Ms. Mali Sandquist
Ayurvedic Nuad Thai



Ms. Pannee Puriso Sundmark
Khun Nee
Thaimassage



Ms. Phianphorn Nithichotchaipat
Thaidii Thaimassage



Ms. Prajim Somdee
Pui Massage & Hälsa



Ms. Jintana Hankla
Mata Massage & Hälsa



Ms. Arunluck Karlsson
City Thai Spa & Thai
Massage



Ms. Moa Christensson
M&B Spa and Wellness



Ms. Piyawan Kasamsook
Ae Massage



Ms. Thitima Ounruen
Wanjan Thaimassage

Lessons learned: summary

Insights

- ✧ Choosing the right stakeholders to work with is key to success.
- ✧ Gaining the trust of Thai women takes time, and is helped by the support of influencers, both online and in the community.
- ✧ Being associated with an authority has advantages and disadvantages: it gives the project credibility but can rouse suspicion amongst Thai women.
- ✧ Changing the public image of Nuad Thai is a long-term endeavour.
- ✧ Understanding Thai women and the problems they face is central to creating interventions that will allow them to make changes.
- ✧ The programme is voluntary. Therefore, salons need to be able to see clear benefits.
- ✧ Salon owners are not willing to sacrifice income to attend training. It is important to design activities around their working hours.
- ✧ As we raise the image of Nuad Thai, the salons that are not operating ethically will inevitably start to feel threatened or pressured to make change. This is positive, as it could result in more ethical salons, and negative, as it could create hostility within the Thai massage community.

Risks and limitations

- ✧ As the number of salons in our programme increases, we may lose a degree of personal contact and control. The certification process may need to be stricter to ensure that quality is maintained.
- ✧ There is no guarantee that salons will increase their income after becoming certified. We risk disappointing participants if we are unclear about the expected benefits.
- ✧ The certification programme addresses issues in the massage business. In order to create greater change for Thai women, the certification programme needs to be accompanied by other services and interventions that address the core problems faced by Thai women.
- ✧ Our program does not give us access to the Swedish men who are, in many cases, controlling the salon.

Next steps

Thai women across the Nordic countries and Europe face similar challenges. To address this international issue, international collaboration is essential.

ThaiWISE aims to partner with community groups and municipalities in Sweden and to replicate the certification programme in multiple cities.

Norway has adapted the model with support from the Royal Thai Embassy and guidance from ThaiWISE – Hela Människan i Malmö. Organisations in Denmark and Finland have also expressed interest in implementing our model.

Short-term goals

Our short-term goals are to:

- ✧ increase the number of salons in our certification programme in Malmö (focusing on salons that are already operating ethically)
- ✧ develop a strategy to build relationships with salons that are currently not operating ethically
- ✧ expand the focus of our programme beyond the salon owner to include the welfare and training of salon employees
- ✧ enable the programme to be run in other cities in Sweden and its neighbouring countries
- ✧ continue to work with public relations, social media and outreach to improve the image of Nuad Thai and increase awareness of our certification programme

Maintaining consistency

As we expand the program to other cities where partnerships with Environmental Administrations may not be feasible, we will utilize their established requirements as a foundation for independent inspections. This approach ensures consistent standards across all participating cities.

In Malmö we have used a certification logo featuring Malmö Municipality. For other cities, we will use a location-neutral logo.



Long-term effects

We are working towards gradual, sustainable change. We anticipate the following long-term effects of our programme:

- ✧ An increasing amount of the 80% of salon owners who are operating illegally will be inspired by the existence of certified salons to become certified
- ✧ Increased media coverage of positive aspects of Nuad Thai
- ✧ A change in the public image of Nuad Thai, with both men and women feeling comfortable entering a Nuad Thai salon
- ✧ Salon owners will see an alternative to the stigmatisation they face, and will be inspired to make changes

A note from ThaiWISE's project manager

Developing and launching the pilot of our certification programme in Malmö has been more than a full-time job. It is the result of dedication, commitment and personal sacrifice.

It is important that anyone who starts replication of the certification programme in a new city is committed to seeing it through, as the well-being and trust of many vulnerable women depend on it.

Be prepared for the personal nature of this work. Once you have earned the trust of Thai women, they will confide many details of

their lives. This is beneficial, as it helps you to better understand your target group. It can also be emotionally harrowing, as they reveal issues such as domestic violence and oppression. You must be able to connect them to existing services. You may also need emotional support.

Most importantly, witnessing the profound impact this program has on the lives of Thai women makes every challenge worthwhile!

Panadda (Yui) Changmanee
Project Manager, ThaiWISE



Replication of the certification programme

We hope to see our certification programme recreated in all major cities in Sweden and its neighbouring countries. With support from local municipalities, and the invaluable insights we have gained, this expansion can take place relatively easily.

The expansion of our certification programme can be an extremely effective way to improve the lives of Thai women nationally and internationally.

We plan to start ThaiWISE branches in other major cities in Sweden, where we will replicate the certification programme and build on the work done in Malmö.

We are also willing to implement the certification programme in additional cities, working from our Malmö head office.

Additional resources are, of course, necessary in order to expand our work. Our experience has shown us that initiating the certification programme in a new city requires two full-time staff members. It is important that these staff members are Thai.

It is vital that there are sufficient funds and a commitment to continue the programme. It can take up to four years to see significant results. Failure to continue the programme would damage the trust and the financial situation of the women who are involved.

With thanks

We thank all our stakeholders, and in particular the Malmö Municipality for believing in ThaiWISE – Hela Människan i Malmö and devoting resources to the project. The Environmental Administration's role has been critical to our success.

We also thank the Royal Thai Embassy for their commitment to helping improve the lives of Thai women in Sweden. Their financial support, and their time, are meaningful to the Thai community and to our certified salons.

Finally, we salute and thank the brave salon owners who have pioneered our certification programme in Malmö.

Final note

The Certification of Ethical Nuad Thai Businesses: Malmö Model is the result of a long-term collaboration that enabled us to continuously adapt, develop and contribute to better conditions within the Thai massage industry.

It is a collaboration where, based on the needs of the target group, we have created content that promotes empowerment, professionalism and sustainability.

ThaiWISE has created a programme that is completely unique locally, nationally and internationally. It has value for Thai massage in many different contexts, as the state of this industry seem to be similar regardless of city or country.

The results and the lessons highlighted in this report give us valuable knowledge to continue to expand, motivate and engage more people in the Thai massage industry.

As a partner, we are proud to see the results and the lessons we have learned together. We can now confidently start the next chapter of ThaiWISE and continue to develop the Malmö model.

Niclas Olsson

Development Secretary
Labour Market and Social Services
Malmö Municipality

Endnotes

- 1 <https://world-nuad-thai.com/>
- 2 Noomi - Helamänniskan i Malmö. (2019). Preliminary Assessment: A Female Perspective on the Conditions of Women working in the Thai Massage Industry in Malmö
- 3 <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/granskning/ug/har-erbjuder-agaren-sex-med-dotter-vill-du-ha-den-unga>
- 4 <https://yle.fi/a/3-10412728>

"Being part of this programme is very important. I am proud to be a certified massage salon owner.

I feel like I have something to offer to my community, something that will benefit others.

I am pioneering a change for Thai women in massage."

Phianphorn Nithichotchaipat
Thaidii Thaimassage, Malmö



Contact



contact@thaiwise.se



+46 76 035 32 78 (Mon - Wed)



Facebook: NuadThaiNordic, ThaiWISE Malmö



LINE: ThaiWISE



www.thaiwise.se



www.nuadthai.se