

RUHAMA

Annual Report 2017



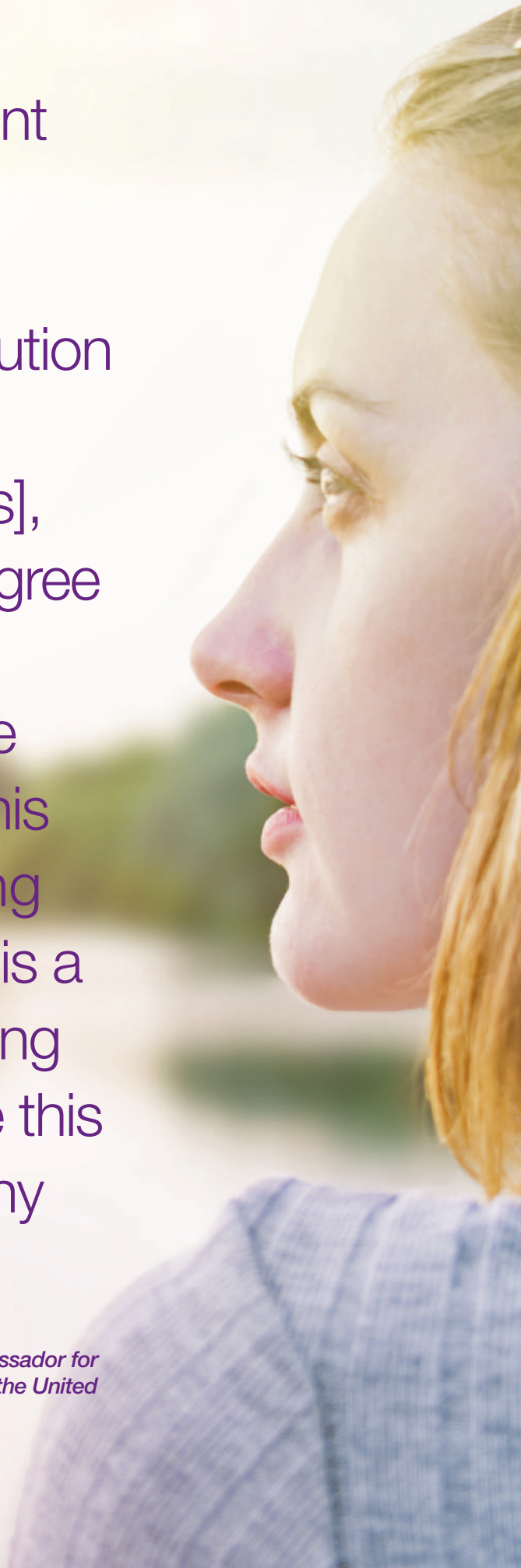
Supporting Women Affected by Prostitution

Overcoming harm, achieving justice



“The #MeToo movement must include sexual trafficking, sexual exploitation and prostitution as one of the core violations that it [tackles], because it’s the nth degree of harassment, abuse and violence that we’ve been talking about in this movement...Something has happened. There is a wave, there is a bile rising that we cannot tolerate this treatment as objects any longer.”

Mira Sorvino, Actor, activist and UNODC Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight Against Human Trafficking, speaking at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women





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CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT



On behalf of the Board of Ruhama, I am very pleased to present this report on the work of the organisation during 2017.

During the year, Ruhama supported 304 people affected by prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The majority (244) received individualised casework support which, depending upon need,

might include counselling, addiction support, the provision of emergency accommodation or support with the criminal justice process, social welfare services or immigration.

All of Ruhama's services are offered on a free and confidential basis. Our approach is always non-directive and non-discriminatory. Seeking to exit prostitution is not a requirement to access Ruhama's support, nor is fluency in English, or holding a valid immigration permission.

We remain the only specialist, frontline NGO working in this field on a nationwide basis and there is undoubtedly a continuing and growing need for our services. While prostitution has largely moved off the streets into apartments or massage parlours, it has at the same time become quite pervasive in Ireland over the past few years. It has also become particularly well suited to the exploitation of vulnerable young people through trafficking. In this context, it is worth reiterating Ruhama's position that prostitution and sex trafficking are often inextricably linked. Prostitution is generally a cash business which takes place in secret. There are no labour laws or contracts of employment. A woman (or girl) in a brothel may have had her ID documents and passport taken and may be moved on a regular basis. She may not have English or any immigration status. Indeed, so called 'sex work' is rarely a free choice, but rather a result of circumstances such as poverty, trafficking, grooming or drug

addiction. It is far from our understanding of a 'regular job' – being inherently dangerous and exploitative.

While Ruhama's primary focus is on providing comprehensive and practical services to those who seek our support, we also work very hard to advocate and lobby for legislation and human rights-based policies in respect of prostitution and trafficking. 2017 was a particularly significant year for us as this work bore fruit. Passed in February 2017 and officially commenced in March 2017, the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017* contains a range of legal instruments to tackle sexual exploitation, including tougher penalties for those who profit from prostitution. The repeal of the offence of soliciting for prostitution coupled with the criminalisation of the purchase of sex (the buyer), brings Ireland's prostitution laws in line with the 'Nordic model', recognising the human rights violations experienced by the majority of women who end up involved in prostitution. The next battle is to get this legislation properly enforced.

We are extremely grateful to all funders and donors, statutory and personal, without whom the organisation could not have done any of this work. We also thank the other NGOs, the Department of Justice and Equality, the HSE and An Garda Síochána, with whom we work on a regular basis.

Finally, I would, on a personal basis, like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their support and significant contribution to the development of Ruhama during 2017, and to convey my genuine appreciation for the work of each member of the growing Ruhama team, led by CEO Sarah Benson, and, of course, our fantastic volunteers who give so generously of their time.

Colm O'Dwyer SC
Chair of Ruhama

RUHAMA'S BOARD

Colm O'Dwyer (*Chairperson*)
Valerie Judge (*Secretary*)
Catherine Clancy
Donal Dunlop (*appointed January 2017*)
Margaret Lynch (*resigned February 2018*)
Ethna McDermott
Myriam McLaughlin
Karen McMenamin (*appointed April 2017*)
Jennie O'Reilly (*appointed February 2017*)
Mary Scully

FOREWORD



I am honoured to present Ruhama's work for 2017 to you in this Annual Report. As always, this was a year filled with diverse activities in support of women affected by prostitution, including victims of sex trafficking. Our team of staff and volunteers, with the support and guidance of our Board, worked tirelessly to meet the

often-complex needs of **304** women, transgender people and men. My sincere thanks to the whole team for their dedication and commitment during 2017.

The varied and difficult life circumstances of those seeking our services are highlighted not just through the statistics that show our output of over **3000** face-to-face meetings and in excess of **23,000** telephone contacts during the year, but through the stories of Janet, Leticia and Nea. These stories really bring home to us the terrible breach of trust and violation of human rights experienced by victims of trafficking and prostitution. They highlight the violence which is inherent in the sex trade, and they help us to understand the many different support requirements that typically need to be met to empower women to recover from trauma, and to rebuild their lives. They bring home to us the reality of prostitution and sex trafficking as core issues for us to consider when we say '#MeToo', and '#TimesUp'.

2017 was a year when women across the world stood up to decry the sexual harassment and violence they experience in their working environments. Of course, prostitution is inherently a form of sexual harassment and abuse, and survivors joined the movement to share their experiences too. To quote one such courageous woman: "Prostitution is #MeToo on steroids due to the hourly sexual harassment, rape, unwanted advances/penetration and aggressive and violent behaviour by...privileged men sexually commodifying our bodies." (Autumn Burris, sex trade survivor and activist, speaking at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women).

Prostitution is almost the complete antithesis of 'decent work'. Countries such as Germany who tried to make it a

regular job have failed completely because there is no way to eradicate the harm, inequality and abuse on which the system of prostitution itself is predicated. These countries are now struggling to reframe their laws in the face of hugely expanded prostitution trades, increased trafficking and persistent problems with organised crime.

In Ireland in 2017 we called #TimesUp on the sex trade with the enactment of the *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017* which decriminalised those in prostitution and legally declared that no person has the right to purchase sexual access to another. Ruhama was proud to work alongside over 70 other organisations cross-cutting all of Irish society, including the labour movement, as members of the Turn Off the Red Light Campaign, to achieve this goal. The legislation was finally passed through the tireless support of the then Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald, who clearly articulated a recognition of the inequality of the sex trade and the vulnerability of the majority who find themselves in prostitution and trafficked.

A key component of the response to the exploitation of prostitution and sex trafficking is to ensure that there are free and accessible services available to those who are at risk of, or in prostitution/trafficked. In 2017 Ruhama committed to expanding its range of services, including the development of an innovative work placement scheme, as well as enhancing referral pathways for those who may be in the country and unaware of the supports that are available.

As always, we have worked collaboratively with other key service providers to meet women's needs and we thank all our NGO and statutory partners who strive, as we do, to ensure that no-one in need of help falls through the cracks of society.

My final thanks go as always to the extraordinary women with whom it has been a privilege to collaborate during 2017, as we worked with them to meet their goals and realise their aspirations.

Sarah Benson

Chief Executive Officer, Ruhama

ABOUT RUHAMA



Ruhama is an Irish Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and a registered charity founded in 1989, which works with women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

WHO WE SUPPORT

Ruhama supports women, including transgender women who have been affected by prostitution. This includes those who:

- Are actively involved in prostitution
- Are seeking to exit (leave) prostitution
- Are victims of sex trafficking
- Have a past experience of prostitution/sex trafficking.

Ruhama is the only specialist, frontline NGO in Ireland working specifically to support anyone with these experiences on a nationwide basis. During 2017 we also supported a small number of men affected by prostitution.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Ruhama's vision is of a more just society, in which prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation do not exist.

In working towards this vision, our mission is to:

- Reach out to and provide support services to women affected by prostitution and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation
- Based on individual need, to offer assistance and opportunities to explore alternatives to prostitution
- Work to change public attitudes, practices and policies which allow the exploitation of women through trafficking and prostitution.

“At Ruhama I started out as a victim [of sex trafficking], but now I see myself as a warrior, a survivor, and it is Ruhama who helped me to realise this.”

Marina*



Supporting Women Affected by Prostitution

HOW WE WORK



Based on 28 years of supporting and listening to women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking, at the heart of Ruhama's work is the **recognition of sexual exploitation as a form of violence against women and a serious violation of women's human rights**. For many women, the experience of prostitution has negatively impacted on their sense of dignity and liberty, their bodily integrity, and their physical and mental wellbeing. When women reach out to us for help, our work typically centres around supporting them to overcome the trauma that results from being systematically sexually exploited and guiding them on the path to live a new, independent life free from violence and coercion.

Recognising that prostitution is clearly a gendered phenomenon – the vast majority of those who are bought and sold for sex across the world are women and girls – we take a **gender-sensitive approach** to our work. This means understanding the factors, such as poverty, a lack of education, child abuse and domestic violence, that make women and girls particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and working with women to overcome

these vulnerabilities and feel empowered to live full lives. For some women, this empowerment includes seeking access to justice for crimes that have been committed against them; for others it is working tirelessly as survivor-activists to change the laws that allow sexual violence and exploitation to go unpunished in the first place.

Women's experiences and needs have always informed the **guiding principles** underpinning Ruhama's work:

- Providing a non-judgemental service
- Placing a high value on equality, inclusivity, cultural diversity, dignity and respect
- Affirming every woman's right to society's protection and respect
- Commitment to learning and to continual service improvement
- Accountability to the women we work with and our funders.

In accordance with our mission, Ruhama works at both individual and societal levels

to tackle sexual exploitation. First and foremost are the direct, frontline services we provide to the women who need our support. At the same time, we are also very engaged in advocating for social, political and legal measures that tackle the systems and conditions that lead to women needing our help in the first place. Alongside many national and international allies, we are part of the battle against the proliferation of the global sex trade. This Report highlights our progress in both areas of work in 2017.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

In 2017 we provided services to women, transgender people and men affected by prostitution. However, unsurprisingly, given the overwhelmingly gendered nature of prostitution, the vast majority were women, and so we mainly refer to those who used our services as 'women' throughout the Report. This choice is also influenced by the vital need to maintain the confidentiality of our service users – because the number of transgender people and men supported in 2017 is proportionately very small, we avoid any direct references that might risk identifying them.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

All Ruhama's services are offered on a **free and confidential** basis. We provide an **inclusive 'person-centred' model of support**, which is led by each individual's priority needs, respects 'where they are at' in their lives and empowers them to select the particular supports they require from the array of different services we offer. This means we support women at any point in their experience of prostitution – those involved right now, those seeking to leave (exit) or who have already left, and those with an historic experience of prostitution.

Crucially, seeking to exit prostitution is not a requirement to access Ruhama's

"Those exploited through prostitution can face substantial barriers to exiting and rebuilding their lives. These include practical and psychological barriers, such as the effects of trauma, addiction, and coercion by other individuals. The availability of tailored support services plays a critical role in whether a woman is able to exit prostitution."

The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade

support, nor is fluency in English or a valid immigration permission.

The tailored, holistic supports we offer reflect the often-complex needs and recovery processes of women who have experienced prostitution and trafficking.

Whether outreach and crisis intervention, person-centred casework, education and development programmes, or housing and welfare assistance, all the support on offer is delivered in accordance with each woman's wishes and needs, with full respect for her rights, and at her own pace.

Ruhama's frontline services to anyone affected by prostitution and sex trafficking include:

An out-of-hours emergency response



Outreach, including:

- Mobile street outreach to Dublin's 'red light' areas
- Outreach to the HSE Women's Health Service (sexual health clinic)

Outreach to the women's prison in Dublin



Support with immigration issues including, asylum, visas and repatriation



Individual casework support and advocacy, including:

- Needs assessment
- Care planning and case management
- Referral to other key agencies that can offer additional support

Housing and social welfare support



Interpretive support



Emotional and psychological supports, including:

- Counselling
- Holistic therapies
- Addiction support

Support for women involved in the criminal justice process



Crisis accommodation in emergency situations



An Education & Development Programme, including:

- One-to-one and group education, training and development opportunities
- Support into mainstream training and education
- Support with job-seeking

Practical support (material needs) in certain circumstances



In 2017, Ruhama
supported a total of

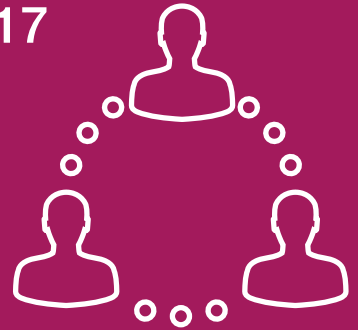
304

women, transgender
people and men with a
broad range of services

KEY STATISTICS

THE DEMAND FOR OUR SERVICES IN 2017

In 2017, Ruhama supported a total of 304 people affected by prostitution in a variety of different ways. The vast majority of these were women, but during the year we also provided support to a number of transgender people and men.



943

**Staff and volunteer
hours of street outreach**

81

**Received
Education &
Development
support**

3,022

Face-to-face contacts **

13,406

SMS contacts***

50

**Benefited from
our dedicated
Housing &
Welfare service**

91

**Accessed Ruhama's services for the first
time, of whom:**

- 65 received general casework support
- 26 received casework support as victims of trafficking

244*

Received casework support, of whom:

- 135 received general casework support
- 109 received casework support as victims of trafficking

62

**Received street
outreach support**

10,615

Telephone contacts***

* 2 service users accessed both street outreach and casework support

** This includes face-to-face contacts provided via casework, street outreach and our Education and Development Programme

*** Phone contacts to and on behalf of service users

STREET OUTREACH



Street outreach was delivered over 121 nights in 2017

WORKING TO ADDRESS HARM

Whilst the majority of those Ruhama supports are involved in Ireland's sex trade in 'off-street' locations, including brothels, massage parlours, hotels, houses and apartments, there remains a smaller group of often very vulnerable women involved in 'on-street' prostitution. Our dedicated outreach service brings Ruhama to the streets up to four nights each week to engage with this group.

In our van specially adapted for outreach purposes, we visited Dublin's known 'red light' streets on **121 nights** during 2017, providing practical and emotional support to a total of **62 women** involved in street prostitution. The van provides a safe, welcoming space where women can have some of their very practical and immediate needs met, such as hot drinks, snacks, hats and gloves and health and safety supplies. These are offered alongside essential emotional support and onward referrals to our own and other specialist services.

Volunteers and staff spent a total of **943 hours** providing street outreach support over the year, with over **200 face-to-face interactions** recorded. Most women

“All over the world, and throughout history, the most systemically disadvantaged groups have been overrepresented in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. Prostitution is a highly gendered and patriarchal system that disproportionately impacts the poorest women and children.”

CAP International – the Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution

involved in street prostitution in Dublin tend not to have a consistent presence on the streets, coming out intermittently and for relatively short periods of time during the year. Therefore, during the year the outreach van team **engaged with women on an average of four occasions each**. 44% of women engaged just once, 38% on 2-5 occasions, 7% on 6-9 occasions and 11% on ten or more occasions.

As in previous years, many of the women in street prostitution we encountered in 2017 were leading complex and in some cases chaotic lives. Women were typically facing a range of vulnerabilities and challenges including poor physical and mental health, family breakdown, domestic violence, poverty, debt and control/coercion by third parties. **50%** of the women who engaged reported experiencing **drug and/or alcohol problems**, and **34%** reported being either **currently homeless or at risk of homelessness***.

Additionally, women also had to contend with serious risks and violence whilst selling sex on the street – many women reported being threatened, robbed, and physically or sexually assaulted. In this regard there was one positive new development to report for 2017 – **women were relieved to find out from the Outreach team that they could no longer be criminalised for selling sex on-street** (since the passing of the new *Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act* in March of 2017). Some women described feeling safer and less anxious on the streets now that the law and the Gardaí are 'on their side'.

* These were unprompted disclosures made by women as the van is a non-directive space. It is estimated that drug and alcohol issues affect the large majority of those in on-street prostitution

JANET'S STORY

I'm Janet* from Dublin, now 23. I come from a great family, but I never did well at school and didn't have much confidence in myself. Because of this I always felt a bit empty inside, like something was missing. Then I did the typical teenage thing and 'got in with the wrong crowd'. They were into drugs and I got into them too, very quickly. After about a year the friends were gone, but the drugs were still with me – they seemed to fill up that empty feeling I had. But I always needed more and so I basically ended up on the streets to try and get the money for what I needed.

I was in quite a bad way by 2016 – I was on a mixture of heroin, tablets and alcohol. The year passed in a blur, but I know I was on the streets a good bit, and I know I got on Ruhama's van lots of nights when I was out. At first, I just wanted the hot coffee, but then I got to know them on the van a bit better and felt more relaxed to stay and have a chat, even when I was out of it! I actually got on great with those women, and sometimes we had a real laugh!

At that time, I was living with my parents on and off, but because my drug use was spiralling and I was desperate for money, I started getting in trouble with the police. I don't blame them, but sometimes my folks would kick me out. I was actually homeless and staying in different hostels, which I never felt safe or relaxed in. This was a pretty bad time for me and I remember talking a lot about it to the women on Ruhama's van – I would talk about my shame and my greatest fear – of my parents finding out that I was in prostitution. I thought that they would throw me out for good and never speak to me again if they found out.

I suppose over time I really started to feel I could trust the workers I met on the van because I

was very honest with them about my drug-taking and the issues with my mam and dad. To try and help they gave me loads of information about services that could help me – like drug support, the sexual health clinic and criminal solicitors. Sometimes I'd take the odd leaflet, or the workers would Google a phone number for me and write it down. But I never took that stuff that seriously at first because I don't think I was really ready to make a change. I always said 'no' to Ruhama when they offered me their own casework service because in my head I felt I would need to detox first before I could even think about that.

Eventually I decided enough was enough – I couldn't face another punter, no matter how off my head I was. Using some of the details the van workers gave me, I contacted a few places for support. Best of all – although I had tried and failed in the past – this time was different, and I managed to detox. I hadn't been on the streets for months and months when my support worker in the after-care programme arranged for me to go into Ruhama. It was a bit weird at first – this was my first time in their offices and my first time to see them in daylight!

But it was nice to hear that some of the van workers had been wondering what I'd been up to seeing as they hadn't seen me in ages. Since then I've done loads of stuff there – casework, where I could make my own care plan with my caseworker, counselling and some classes. I know it's still early days for me, but I think my confidence is growing, and I've had no relapses at all. I'm finally making real plans for my future and best of all – sorting out my relationship with my mam and dad – that is so important to me.



CASEWORK AND CARE PLANNING



BUILDING A NEW FUTURE AND SEEKING JUSTICE

In 2017 **244 women** accessed Ruhama's casework support; **91** of whom engaged with the service for the first time. The goal of this work is to provide practical assistance and support for women in overcoming the trauma of sexual exploitation, accessing justice and ultimately regaining control over their lives.

The service is open and inclusive – meeting each woman 'wherever she is at' in her life and in relation to her involvement in prostitution, whether current or in her past; whether she is planning to stay involved or exit. This also means physically meeting with each woman where she is at – at various locations around the country if she is unable to travel to our offices in Dublin, if she is isolated living in Direct Provision, confined to hospital or even in prison.

Many women come to us first because they are in immediate crisis, a crisis that we support them to effectively address before the more focused and intensive casework can really begin. Each woman is assigned a dedicated case worker, and when she is ready, her case worker supports her to develop her own tailored care plan. This plan encompasses all of the areas of her life where she would like

"I see a little more light for the future. I'm not there yet...But some of the bitterness is going away. I have more hope."

Shayla*

to make positive change and forms the basis of the holistic and practical support that she will then receive from Ruhama.

In all cases, the support provided is flexible and adaptable according to each woman's needs and the goals she has set for herself. Our approach is always non-directive and non-discriminatory – respecting women's choices about every aspect of their lives.

Women who accessed our casework support for the first time in 2017 came to Ruhama via a number of different routes, which, as ever, highlights the importance of multi-agency partnership working in this area. In addition to a significant number of self-referrals, our main external referral sources for 2017 included An Garda Síochána, the HSE Women's Health Service, and solicitors – all essential groups of professionals in terms of the identification and assistance of women exploited in prostitution/trafficked.

Women in prostitution typically have significant health needs, particularly sexual health needs, and it is because of this that

we greatly value our collaboration with the HSE's Women's Health Service (where we provide outreach) and the Anti-Human Trafficking Team, with whom we work to provide mutually beneficial support to a variety of victims of sex trafficking.

The nationalities of the women we support each year always reflect the global nature of the international sex trade and the extent to which some women are moved around the world to maximise profit for their exploiters. In 2017 we once again supported women from Africa, South America, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe – in fact the 244 women we supported in casework during the year originated from **39 different countries** across the world* (see map on page 16). The women accessing casework in 2017 most commonly originated from:

- Nigeria (63 women)
- Ireland (41 women)
- Brazil (37 women)
- Romania (21 women).

* The nationality of 3 women was unknown

Referral sources for all new cases in 2017

Gardaí	27
Self	21
Women's Health Service (HSE)	13
Solicitor	7
Drugs/Homeless Service	4
Friend	4
Ruhama Service User	3
Anti Human Trafficking Team (HSE)	2
Direct Provision	2
Migrant Support Project	2
Outreach Van	2
Domestic Violence Support Service	1
Embassy	1
Mental Health Service	1
Social Worker	1
Total	91

Reflecting this diversity, Ruhama has a **multi-lingual casework team**, and we also provide access to interpreters if necessary.

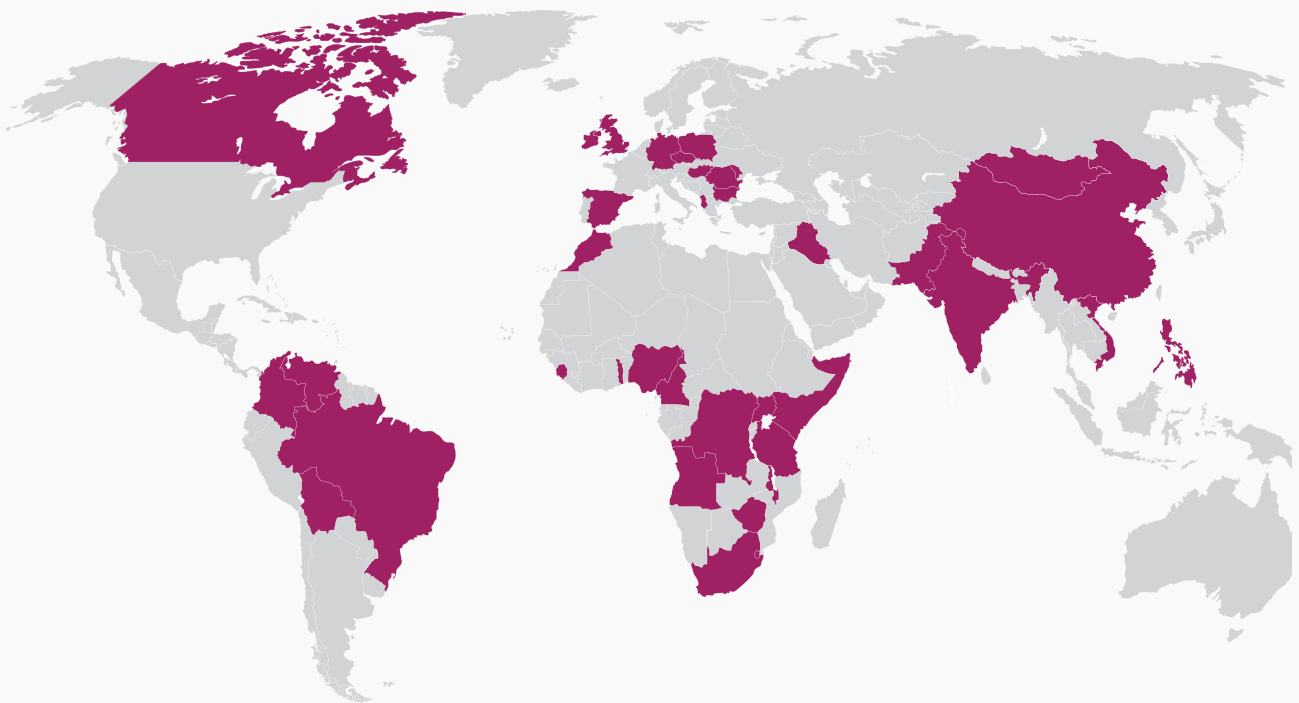
Those we supported in 2017 entered prostitution via many different routes, whether trafficked, otherwise coerced, or drawn in as a result of vulnerabilities and difficult life circumstances. During the year we provided specialist casework support to **109 victims of sex trafficking**, originating from **26 different nations** (see map on page 17).

Casework is often an extensive process, and the needs that women have within this process at Ruhama reflect the particular and often complex impacts of prostitution and sex trafficking on their lives. This is just a flavour of the breadth and depth of the work undertaken by the casework team in 2017:

- Over **2,000 face-to-face support contacts** with women
- **249 hours** spent supporting women through **inter-agency meetings** regarding their case or particular circumstances
- **235 hours** spent supporting women at **legal and immigration**-related meetings
- Dozens of women supported to manage their **health**, especially health matters as a consequence of prostitution, including **sexual health** issues
- **114 women** supported to manage their **mental health**
- Scores of **reports written** (primarily for legal and immigration purposes) advocating for women's rights and entitlements
- Many women supported with issues as diverse as **addiction, parenting, welfare benefits** and **family reunification**.

Another important feature of casework in 2017 was supporting women seeking access to justice. The violence inherent in prostitution means that women are at constant risk of robbery and physical and sexual assault – not to mention the fact that the sex trade is the main context in which sex trafficking occurs – and for many this risk becomes a reality. Women describe violence experienced at the hands of sex buyers, pimps and members of organised criminal networks. This year, Ruhama caseworkers supported **24 women to formally report crimes** committed against them to An Garda Síochána, in an effort to see the perpetrators held accountable and protect others who are similarly vulnerable. A number of other **women also shared information with Gardaí** about perpetrators of crimes against them, but chose not to make formal statements for the moment for a variety of reasons.

Nationalities of all accessing Ruhama's Casework service (244 of 39 known nationalities)

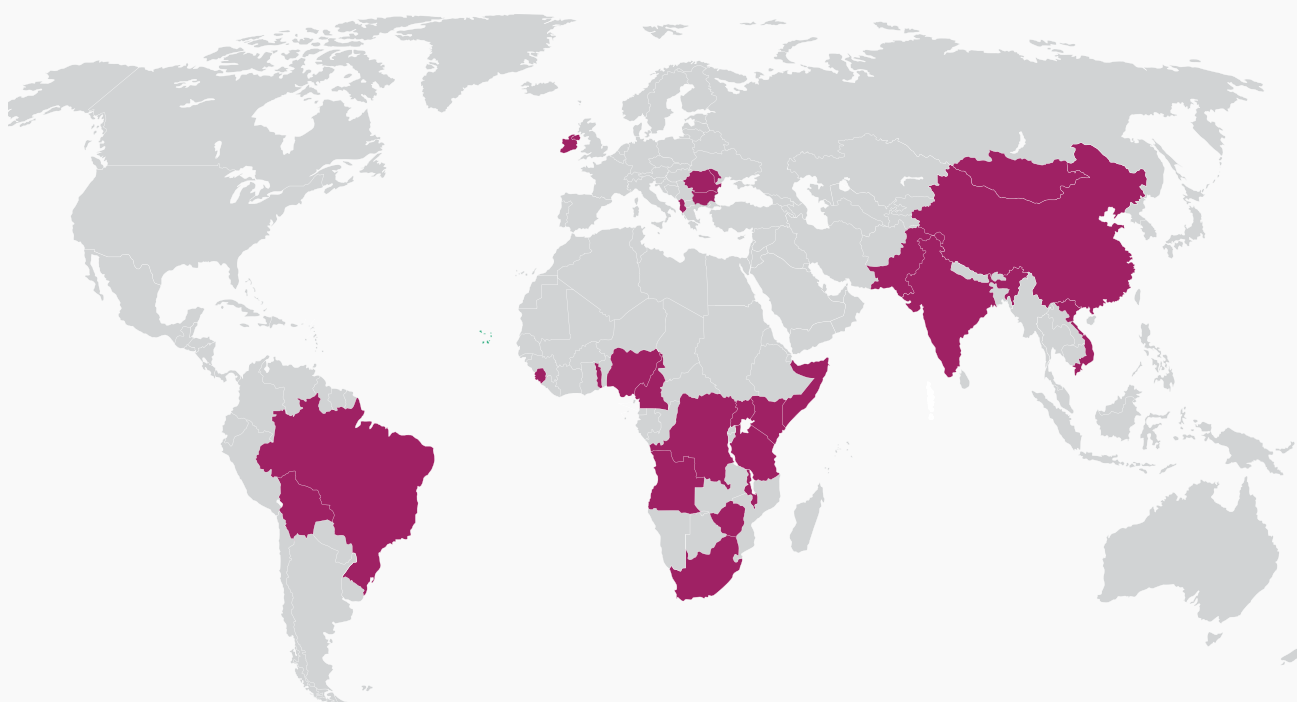


Nigeria	63	Pakistan	3	Moldova	1
Ireland	41	South Africa	3	Morocco	1
Brazil	37	Uganda	3	Northern Ireland	1
Romania	21	Albania	2	Philippines	1
Spain	7	Colombia	2	Poland	1
Zimbabwe	7	Mongolia	2	Sierra Leone	1
Bulgaria	6	Venezuela	2	Somalia	1
DR Congo	5	Canada	1	Swaziland	1
Czech Republic	4	Germany	1	Tanzania	1
Angola	3	Great Britain	1	Togo	1
Bolivia	3	Hungary	1	Vietnam	1
Cameroon	3	India	1	Unknown	3
China	3	Kenya	1		
Malawi	3	Kurdistan	1		

244

FIGURE 2

Nationalities of all victims of trafficking accessing Ruhamā's Casework service (109 of 26 nationalities)



Nigeria	51	Uganda	2
Brazil	7	Bolivia	1
Romania	6	India	1
Zimbabwe	6	Kenya	1
Bulgaria	5	Moldova	1
DR Congo	4	Northern Ireland	1
Malawi	3	Sierra Leone	1
Albania	2	Somalia	1
Angola	2	South Africa	1
Cameroon	2	Tanzania	1
China	2	Togo	1
Ireland	2	Vietnam	1
Mongolia	2		
Pakistan	2		

109

LETICIA'S STORY

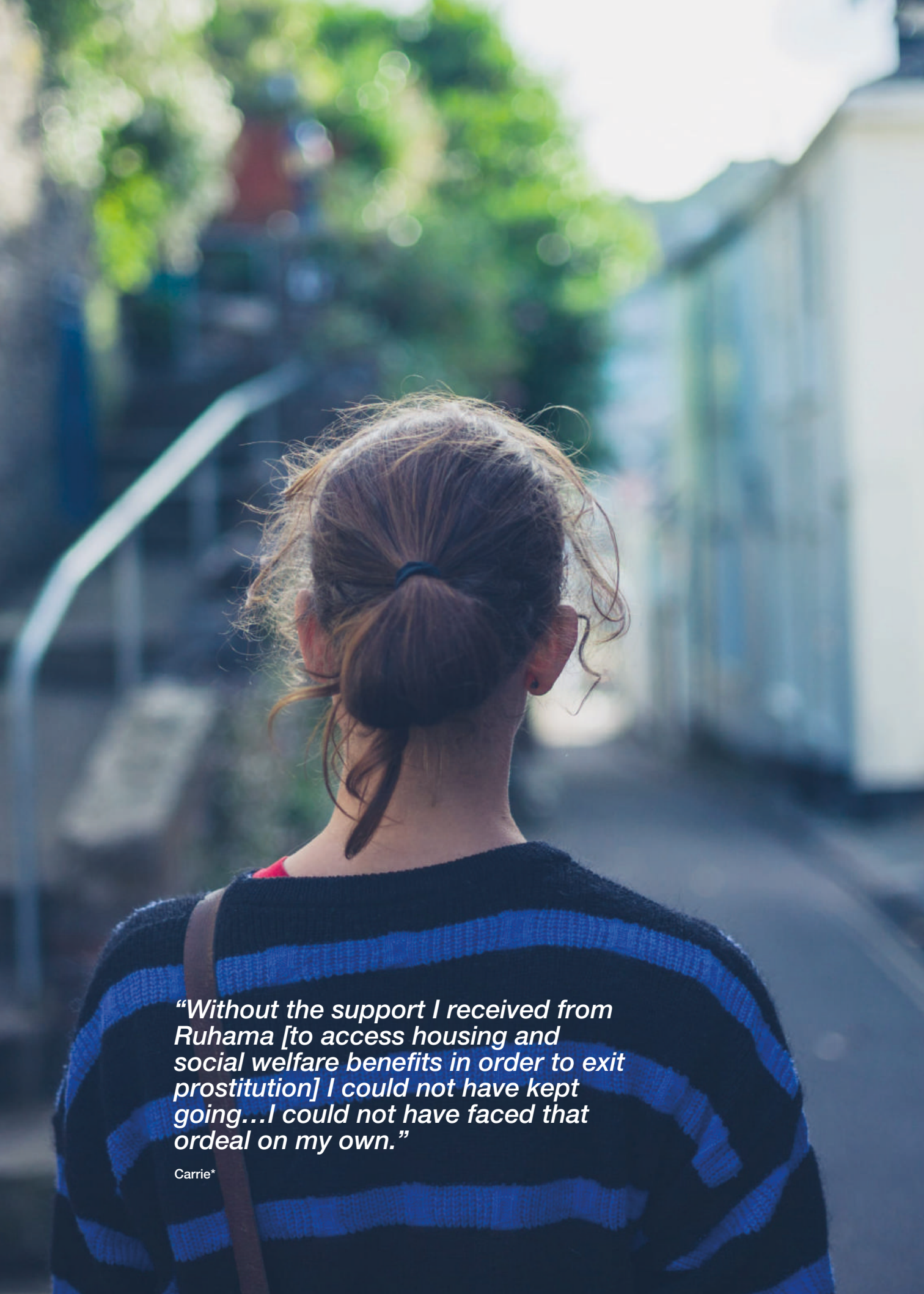
My name is Leticia*. In 2017 I was robbed by a man and badly beaten up. He pretended to be a client and came to our flat and took everything. I was so shocked and upset and called the Gardaí to report it. The Gardaí gave me a card with a free text number on it. I sent the word REACH to 50100. A woman named Sheila from Ruhama called me back. She arranged for accommodation for me for a few days which was such a relief because I didn't want to go back to the flat right away. I felt completely unsafe there. I was introduced to a Ruhama caseworker and she spoke my language, which was great as it made it so much easier to express what I felt and what I needed. She came with me when I was making statements about the attack. The Gardaí were actually really helpful and supportive, but it was still very stressful. It was so good to have someone with me who was just there for my support.

During this whole process I realised that I was really traumatised by the assault. I was having panic attacks and jumping at the slightest

little noise. I wasn't sleeping for more than a few minutes at a time and then waking in a sweat and full of adrenaline. It was really exhausting. Ruhama provided counselling sessions which helped me manage the anxiety I was experiencing. I was also having some bad health problems which didn't help matters and my caseworker arranged for a GP to see me for no charge, as I was struggling financially and have no medical card.

I have been escorting since it happened, but that violent incident was not the first I have experienced and so I've decided I've had enough and am looking for other things to do now. My caseworker is really experienced in immigration and is supporting me with my status. In the meantime, I am doing some classes in Ruhama and working with the Career Guidance Counsellor. I have other qualifications from my home country and want to work in the hotel and catering industry here, so I'm building up my CV and gaining confidence and skills in job-seeking in Ireland.



A person with brown hair tied in a ponytail, wearing a blue and black striped sweater, is walking away from the camera down a street. The background is blurred, showing green trees and buildings. The lighting is bright, suggesting daytime.

“Without the support I received from Ruhama [to access housing and social welfare benefits in order to exit prostitution] I could not have kept going...I could not have faced that ordeal on my own.”

Carrie*

HOUSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE

A NEW HOME FOR A NEW LIFE

Alongside our casework support, Ruhamá also provides dedicated one-to-one assistance with housing and social welfare issues – often a vital lifeline for the women we support, and especially those seeking to exit prostitution and start a new life.

The importance of a safe space that one can really call ‘home’ cannot be underestimated for women overcoming the trauma of sexual exploitation – our support and advocacy in this area focuses on ensuring that women’s rights and entitlements are upheld in this regard.

In 2017, **50 women** availed of our Housing and Social Welfare support service, which included very practical help with vital life essentials, such as opening bank accounts, completing paperwork and undertaking property searches and viewings. The service also provides tailored advocacy for women in landlord/housing association negotiations, in ensuring they can secure their full social welfare rights and entitlements, and in developing budgeting skills to manage their new households independently.

In the context of the current housing crisis in Ireland, where demand continues to massively exceed supply, women again experienced a series of significant barriers in 2017 to securing a safe place to stay. These include women remaining trapped in Direct Provision for long periods because of delays in receiving their permission to remain in Ireland, but also because they face exorbitant rental costs and enormous competition for places in the private rental market.

However, there have also been some positive developments in this area during 2017, which have seen women safely accommodated throughout the year, and should go a long way in future to

facilitating more women to establish their own homes. Key developments include:

- All women in Direct Provision accommodation now qualify for Priority HAP (Housing Assistance Payment Scheme) – previously women in Direct Provision surviving on €1.60 per week found it virtually impossible to save money towards a deposit and the first month’s rent, but under HAP their deposit and rent in advance is paid upfront and directly to the landlord by the relevant Local Authority
- Successfully advocating to a number of Housing agents in 2017 to achieve priority provision of housing to vulnerable and first-time tenants
- Positive working relationships with other specialist organisations providing medium-term and transitional housing, facilitating access to landlords that accept HAP, and offering designated Homelessness support workers and assistance with move-on, all of which benefit the women using Ruhamá’s service.

As is evident from the above, collaborative working is vital in the Housing sector, and we know that homes could not have been secured this year without the assistance and commitment of a wide range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations we work in partnership with, including the HSE, TUSLA, housing and homelessness support agencies, county councils, migrant support organisations and others.

We were also fortunate in 2017 to be able to offer some small grants, thanks to a number of our donors, which women could use to secure and then set up homes. Grants were put towards deposits, advance rental payments and essential homewares; and were vital in

ensuring that women beginning new lives could avoid falling straight into the trap of debt.

In 2017,
50
women
availed
of our
housing
and
welfare
support
service

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

EMPOWERING POTENTIAL

Ruhama's Education and Development Programme supports women to explore their potential, while at the same time opening up alternatives to prostitution, if that is their objective. The Programme taps into the skills and talents women already possess and facilitates them to nurture these as they plan for their future. The Programme is diverse in nature, offering a variety of opportunities for both personal and professional development, tailored specifically for the women who access Ruhama's services.

In 2017, **81 women** availed of Ruhama's Education and Development Programme, accessing a host of options delivered in-house on a group or one-to-one basis, including:

- English language and English literacy skills
- Maths/numeracy skills
- IT skills
- Study skills and study support
- Education grants
- Third-level preparation
- Career guidance counselling
- Interview skills
- CV and cover letter design and development
- Support with course and job applications
- Coaching
- Support to secure volunteer placements, work experience opportunities and paid employment.

During 2017 women availed of Ruhama's **specialist group courses**, typically run twice annually, which are designed to build women's self-confidence and self-efficacy and give them the tools for making positive changes in their lives. These courses include:

- **Trauma Healing Programme** – a trauma healing course, which helps participants with post-traumatic

stress disorder (PTSD) to reduce the levels of stress and anxiety they are experiencing and improve their coping skills and overall mental health

"I feel I can take something with me. Usually I do a class and go outside, and it's gone. With this I can take it with me. I have tools to de-stress, to take care of myself."

Jenara*, Trauma Healing Programme participant

- **STEPS (Steps to Excellence for Personal Success)** – which develops and enhances participants' confidence to work towards building the lives they want to lead

"I can take control of my own life without depending on others."

Heloisa*, STEPS participant

- **Shaping Your Future** – which provides participants with the tools and skills necessary to support job-seeking and their professional development

"I was able to identify what I want for myself and where I would like to go in the future in education and work."

Celeste*, Shaping Your Future participant

- **Computer/IT Skills**

"I'm feeling good that I was ok in the class. The tutor was kind and patient with me".

Annalie*, Computer Skills course participant

52 women benefited from **group courses** provided in-house via Ruhama's Education and Development Programme in 2017, totalling **280 hours** of tuition. **47** availed of **one-to-one tuition**, totalling **323 hours**. Additionally, 32 women received **108 hours** of professional vocational **guidance counselling**, and **27 women** were given **financial support** to access external training opportunities.

2017 was once again a very successful year for the women who accessed Education and Development supports at Ruhama. During the year many made significant improvements in their English language, literacy, numeracy and IT skills as well as building self-confidence and self-esteem and learning specific stress management and coping skills. Other concrete successes** include:

- **32** women developing and executing clear, individually goal-driven career plans with professional support
- **40** women assisted in applying for third level/further education or training
- **28** women supported to attend job/college entry interviews
- **28** women commencing QQI/ professionally accredited courses
- **18** women completed QQI/ professionally accredited courses
- **14** women supported to gain work experience (usually as part of a college course or as trial employment)
- **8** women supported to begin a volunteer work placement

*Names have been changed to preserve confidentiality

** These successes relate only to women still connected to Ruhama's Education and Development Programme when each outcome was recorded, and therefore do not account for any women who formally exited the service during the year and went on to achieve positive outcomes related to their time with the Programme.

- 5 women supported to access new paid employment.

Often, despite great personal commitment, there were structural challenges encountered by some women during the year that impeded them from achieving their education goals; for example:

- The limitations placed on 'Zambrano cases' – i.e. non-EEA citizens with permission to live and work in Ireland because their children are Irish citizens. Despite this permission, women in this situation are ineligible for SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) grants. This injustice leaves women who are eager to enter third level education feeling 'less than' their peers, and means they face very significant barriers to gaining higher level qualifications. Ruhama is currently advocating for women affected to legally challenge this injustice
- The limited options available for regular, high-quality, intensive classes in English (ESOL/EFL) and literacy across the country, and especially for women based outside Dublin. In many locations, classes offered are often once a week only and student groups are too mixed in terms of level and need; negatively impacting on learning
- Ongoing limited accredited educational opportunities for women with asylum seeker status – especially affordable and accessible opportunities.

As ever, we could not have ensured the full delivery of our Education and Development Programme in 2017 without the contributions of our skilled and dedicated tutors, trainers, coaches and facilitators. A number of important partners also played a vital role in this regard, including Capacitar, Careers Portal, Dress for Success, the Pacific Institute Ireland, and a host of national and local education providers across the country.



In 2017,
81
women
participated in
our Education
and Development
Programme

"I could learn with my classmates. I liked seeing them improving their goals and strengths. It made me feel good and I found this beautiful."

Lorna*

THE BRIDGE TO WORK PROGRAMME

PROVIDING ACCESS TO FAIR AND DECENT WORK

One of the exciting developments that Ruhama welcomed in 2017 was the launch of our new **Bridge to Work Programme**. Many years in the making, Bridge to Work aims to provide the women we support with direct access to the employment market. It also creates an excellent opportunity for Irish businesses to collaborate with us in providing often marginalised women with the chance to work and earn a decent income.

The Bridge to Work Programme is co-funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the European Social Fund under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning 2014-2020.

Based on Ruhama's experience of supporting women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking over many years, we know that they can face significant barriers to entering the workplace, including low self-esteem, anxiety, limited or no education or work experience. Bridge to Work has been designed to reduce these barriers by facilitating women to gain practical, on the job experience that will enable their entry into the mainstream employment market. This model will empower participants to

overcome barriers by creating a path into a secure, paid work placement.

Benefits of the Bridge to Work Programme for participating women will include:

- Increased personal growth, confidence and professional development that will allow each woman to identify the areas of work that she is good at and enjoys
- The chance to earn a salary to facilitate financial independence
- The opportunity for her to identify the skills needed to improve on in order to secure long term employment
- Growing a network of contacts and friends as part of a team environment
- Being treated with respect and dignity as a member of a professional team with real responsibilities
- Getting a true sense of a work environment, employers' expectations and appropriate workplace behaviours
- Achieving genuine work experience and employer references for her CV.

Benefits of the Programme for employers include:

- The opportunity to transform and positively influence the lives of women who have experienced exploitation
- Access to highly motivated women looking to demonstrate their abilities and develop new skills
- Ongoing support from Ruhama's Programme Co-ordinator
- The potential to achieve social responsibility objectives
- Support in the recruitment of underrepresented groups
- More motivated and engaged employees.

Can you support Ruhama's exciting new Work Placement Programme?

If you are, or if you know of, an employer that might be interested in hearing more about this innovative new programme, and being a part of truly changing women's lives for the better, please contact the programme coordinator Elaine McGauran. All enquiries are treated in confidence and without obligation.

Email: elaine@bridgetowork.ie
or phone her directly on 086 045 3683.



COUNSELLING AND HOLISTIC THERAPIES



HELPING TO HEAL

The incredibly detrimental impact of sexual exploitation on women's physical and mental health is well documented.

Women accessing Ruhama's services often report having endured brutal levels of sexual, physical and psychological abuse whilst in prostitution. Many have also experienced other forms of violence, abuse, neglect and control, both during childhood and as adults. The cumulative legacy of all of these experiences is women presenting to our service who display some or even all of the following:

- **Low self-esteem** and a low sense of self-worth
- **Anxiety** and **depression**
- **Addiction** to numbing substances
- **Trauma** as a result of constant sexual objectification, that affects all other aspects of their lives and relationships

- Extreme **isolation** and exclusion – from friends, family, education, the workforce, society
- **Dissociation**
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (**PTSD**)
- **Suicidal** ideation and suicide attempts.

Struggling to cope on a daily basis and feeling unable to process and address trauma is identified as a significant barrier to women's abilities to move on with their lives and achieve their goals. Therefore, complementary to our dedicated casework service, Ruhama also provides a free counselling service for those who need additional therapeutic support. In 2017 our counselling team consisted of **four fully accredited and experienced counsellors**, including an Art Therapist. During this year, **142 hours of counselling** were provided to **23 women**.

Counselling supported women on the path to overcoming the trauma of their experiences, empowering them to regain their sense of self. A number of additional women were supported to access external counselling, either through their native language, or at locations outside Dublin as required.

For some, their physical and psychological recovery is also supported by availing of Ruhama's dedicated holistic therapies. These are beneficial for tackling stress and enhancing an overall feeling of calm and wellbeing. In 2017, **20 women** availed of **88 hours** of regular therapies such as reflexology, shiatsu, neck, shoulder and head massage provided by our two **trained holistic therapists**.

“Prostituted people have an extremely high rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (68%), comparable to that of combat veterans.”

“Almost three-quarters (71 %) of the women we interviewed had clinically significant symptoms of dissociation.”

**Melissa Farley, Ph.D., Executive Director,
Prostitution Research & Education**

NEA'S STORY

My name is Nea*. Where I come from it is the tradition if you are a girl for your family to arrange your marriage. When I was 15 my father died, and my mother was left on her own with me and my four siblings. I was told that I would have to be married, and I would not be able to finish school. I was horrified to find that my uncle had arranged that I marry a man who was at least 50 years of age – I expected a boy of my own age. I begged my mother to put a stop to the marriage, but she could not stand up to my uncle.

There was a woman, Irene, who used to come to the village to help some of the girls travel to Europe. They would go to be educated and get jobs. Some of these girls would return home to visit and they would bring lovely presents to their family. I always wished I could be like them. Because this woman was powerful and rich, I asked her to help me get away instead of getting married. She agreed to help and arranged things with my uncle. I was told that I would live with a family in Spain, that I would learn to speak Spanish and go to school there.

I was surprised to learn that when I got to Europe, I was actually in a country called Ireland. I went by car to a house in Dublin. There was a woman called Una, who welcomed me but then told me that I owed her a lot of money. I didn't understand and thought there must be some mistake. In the house I was shown to a bedroom and told to wait there. After about an hour, three men came into the room and raped me, one after the other. They were talking, smiling and laughing. The more I cried and screamed in pain, they more they laughed. I was left very sore and bleeding.

Una told me that I would have to pay her back the money I owed her by sleeping with men. The next day more men came to the house, but this time it was one man at a time. At the end of the day I was given €50. I felt really sick and could not eat. My body hurt from all the rapes and from crying. This went on for days. I knew I had to run away, even though I had no idea where I would go once I did. I got an opportunity one day when I heard Una going out. Even though I was really frightened I ran. I stopped a woman on the street who helped me and rang Ruhamá. Everyone in Ruhamá was really nice to me and supported me with reporting to the police, getting a place to live and my education. They told me they were sorry about the bad things that had happened to me. I blamed myself and felt stupid for believing in Irene, but they said it wasn't my fault. That was important to me.

Even so, all these good things didn't fully take my mind off the bad things that had happened to me. Those things were always there, swimming in my mind – like black sharks. I had nightmares and woke screaming. I couldn't sleep in the dark and had to keep the light on.

The best thing I ever did in Ruhamá was counselling. When my caseworker told me about counselling, at first I said 'no', because I was afraid doing it would mean I was 'mad'. But I wasn't, and it was really good. My counsellor is this very special person who I can say anything to. Things I could never tell another person. My counsellor sees the 'real' me and encourages me and listens. When I finish a session I feel lighter, like a weight has been lifted from me, and the sharks stop swimming.



ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING



Celebrating the passage of the new law at City Hall on International Women's Day

TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Informed by, and complementary to, our frontline work supporting women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking is our advocacy work at both domestic and international levels. With allies at home and abroad we are striving to tackle the drivers of sexual exploitation and the proliferation of the international sex trade. To these ends we undertake a range of influencing activities, including:

- **Raising awareness** of the harms of prostitution and trafficking and promoting the rights of those who have been sexually exploited amongst specific audiences, and the general public at large
- **Advocating for legislative and policy change** that tackles the demand that drives the sex trade, decriminalises those who are exploited within it, and heavily penalises those who organise and profit from prostitution
- **Supporting survivors** of prostitution and sex trafficking to raise their voices against exploitation
- **Providing training** and other resources to key professionals who are in a position to support and respond empathetically to vulnerable persons involved in prostitution.

Highlights of this essential work in 2017 are set out here.

“In a world where prostitution is accepted as a cultural practice, women will never have equality with men. As long as men have the state-sanctioned green light and the socio-cultural acceptance of purchasing women’s bodies for sexual acts, equality for women will remain elusive in the boardroom, in halls of power, on the street or in the home.”

**Taina Bien-Aimé, Executive Director of the Coalition
Against Trafficking in Women (CATW)**

CHANGING THE LAW

2017 heralded a very significant campaigning victory for Ruhama and our allies in the **Turn Off the Red Light (TORL) Campaign**. Passed in February 2017 and officially commenced in March 2017, the **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017** placed a blanket ban on the purchase of sex for the very first time in Ireland, whilst simultaneously decriminalising individuals who sell sex.

Ireland has now become one of a growing number of countries to enact laws that recognise the **inherent exploitation of prostitution**: alongside Sweden, Iceland, Norway, Northern Ireland, France and Canada*. Often referred to as the 'Nordic model' (or more recently the 'Equality model') for addressing prostitution, this is an approach, based on our frontline experience, which Ruhama had been calling for since the early 2000s.

Indeed, this new legislation was the culmination of many years of advocacy, in conjunction with a diverse range of other NGOs, survivor activists, trade unions and civil society organisations who joined forces under the banner of TORL. The process that resulted in its passage was incredibly rigorous, involving a comprehensive consultation by the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality, hundreds of submissions, public hearings, broad media and parliamentary debate and discussion – ultimately with huge Dáil and Seanad majorities supporting the passage of the Act. Legislators, and the then Minister for Justice and Equality Frances Fitzgerald in particular, took note of clear evidence of the complete failure of efforts by other nations to try and legalise and control prostitution trades – which will always be

linked to **organised crime, trafficking and other violations** of prostituted persons. This law is compatible with international human rights instruments: upholding human dignity and recognising the vulnerability of the vast majority of those who are bought and sold for sex across the globe.

We commend Frances Fitzgerald for taking landmark measures to address the demand of sex buyers as the group directly responsible for perpetuating the commercial sex trade. Without demand there would be no supply. We witness every day the ugly consequences of prostitution and sex trafficking, where the most vulnerable women and girls from across the globe are targeted to be used in Ireland's brothels. At the same time, in removing the offence for soliciting, **the spirit of this law is clear**: those in prostitution should not be criminalised. There is now a strong social message enshrined in Irish law: it is not okay for one person to buy access to another person for sex. Bodily autonomy is a human right – buying sex is not. This measure is a vital step forward for gender equality in Ireland.

Fittingly, the Turn Off the Red Light campaign's celebration to mark the passing of the law took place in City Hall on March 8th, International Women's Day. Speakers hailed the effort and dedication of the politicians, inspirational campaigners and survivor activists who were instrumental in achieving this legislative victory.

It is clear that this campaigning victory could not have been secured without the determined advocacy of prostitution survivors and activists, whose voices were instrumental in making a powerful case to politicians, opinion makers and the general public at large on the urgent need for this legislation.

"Five years ago I asked Ireland did we respect human dignity enough to assume responsibility for its protection... On the 14th February, 2017 Ireland gave me her answer and it was yes... This law is about the protection of human dignity, and valuing human dignity above other values... for it establishes a code of conduct between humans that will save generations to come."

Mia de Faoite, Irish survivor activist

* With some restrictions

“I believe that support for targeting the demand for prostitution and criminalising the purchase of sexual services. . . is strengthening across the EU and further afield. Regardless of the various approaches which can be taken to prostitution – be it criminalisation, decriminalisation, legalisation and regulation – there will always be those involved in prostitution who live in the shadows.

They live under the control and direction of others or of their own personal circumstances. These are incredibly vulnerable people. It is all too easy for those purchasing sex through prostitution to turn a blind eye and to ignore the reality that their behaviour supports the exploitation and misery of other people, including through human trafficking. So, we now send a message. If you purchase sexual services through prostitution you are no longer removed from the responsibility for the exploitation of persons through prostitution.

You can no longer ignore the consequences of your actions. . .

We must support and defend the rights of all those abused through prostitution, but even more so we must reduce the risk of today’s young girls and boys being drawn into tomorrow’s prostitution. I repeat the message - we are targeting those who demand these services because it is their behaviour that supports the exploitation of others and that can no longer be ignored.”

**Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Justice and Equality 2014-17,
speaking at City Hall on International Women’s Day, 2017**

INFLUENCING POLICY AND LEGISLATION AT HOME AND ABROAD

In 2017 Ruhama continued to highlight the importance of combatting sexual exploitation and providing appropriate responses to victims and survivors through representation in a range of key domestic forums, including:

- The National Women's Council of Ireland
- The National Observatory on Violence Against Women
- The National Monitoring Committee of the Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016-2021
- The Victims' Rights Alliance
- The Department of Justice and Equality's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit Roundtable and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Working Group
- The South Inner City Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (SICLDATF) Treatment and Rehabilitation Committee.

Throughout the year we also extended our influence and expertise to other jurisdictions that are focusing on issues of prostitution and sex trafficking. We made several key submissions or representations in this respect, including to:

- The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in relation to the Committee's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ireland
- The European Union Civil Society Platform Against Trafficking in Human Beings
- The Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution (CAP) International
- The US State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report
- The UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade's inquiry into 'pop-up' brothels.

RUHAMA ON THE WORLD STAGE

2017 again provided a number of excellent opportunities to progress our advocacy work to uphold the human rights of prostituted women and girls in international forums.

In March, Ruhama's CEO participated in the **61st Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) at the United Nations in New York**, as a member of the official

Irish State delegation. The themes of the 61st session were:

- Women's economic empowerment in work
- The empowerment of Indigenous women and girls.

We met with Ireland's permanent representation to the UN to discuss key policy issues on prostitution and attended the UN Security Council Debate on trafficking. We also attended a number of side events including 'Ending Demand', organised by **CAP International** – a unique alliance of 23 abolitionist frontline NGOs from across the globe – of which Ruhama's CEO is Chairperson. We addressed several very well-received parallel and side events including: 'The Nordic Model on Prostitution: Ensuring Girls' and Young Women's Economic Empowerment'.

CSW once again provided a crucial platform to highlight the issues Ruhama is passionate about with an international audience and was undoubtedly a motivating and energising experience. It was also the chance to form new relationships and work collaboratively with other NGOs, especially survivor-led groups, who share abolitionist principles and are united in the fight for justice for all sexually exploited women and girls across the globe.

International allies were especially eager to hear of important legislative changes to tackle the demand for prostitution in Ireland heralded by the passing of the new *Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017*. This was an opportunity for us to highlight the need to decriminalise individuals in prostitution and re-focus the attention of the law onto sex buyers, thereby sending the message that prostitution is not an empowered choice, and that as an industry, is incompatible with gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

In Spring of 2017 Ruhama was represented in Delhi, India to present at the **Second 'Last Girl First' World Congress Against the Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls**. Organised by CAP International and Apne Aap Women Worldwide (a grassroots Indian NGO working to combat sexual exploitation), the Congress brought together **250 civil**

society representatives, leaders and decision makers from **30 countries** and five continents. The concept of '**Last Girl First**' highlights the fact that the most systematically disadvantaged groups across the world are overrepresented in the sex trade and raises awareness of their harrowing experiences with a view to identifying the best strategies to tackle and prevent this gross exploitation. A **transnational movement** was strengthened as participants pledged to advocate putting the 'Last Girls First' in their own home countries.

RAISING AWARENESS: CALLING FOR ACTION

In 2017 Ruhama engaged in a variety of awareness raising initiatives in person, in mainstream media and on social media, to highlight the harms of prostitution and the global sex trade and to promote our efforts on these issues. In this year we enjoyed extensive media coverage of our frontline and advocacy work and were also successful in broadening our reach and engagement on social media platforms. Dialogue with the media, politicians, public representatives, professionals, community groups and students, to name but a few, all served once again to raise the profile of Ruhama's work to tackle sexual exploitation.



amazing over the years;
of being listened to,
ent, they helped me
me on my way to
inner life is so
on is gone.'

- Michelle, 2009





“I will give you the key to setting up a business which moves 32 million dollars per year . . . A business in which everything is profit, because the body of a woman, if she is young and cared for, can be sold multiple times during the same day, even against her will.”

In the summer we partnered with the Immigrant Council of Ireland to host a screening of **Chicas Nuevas 24 Horas** (New Girls 24 Hours) by renowned Spanish filmmaker and activist Mabel Lozano. This film explores the multi-million-dollar global trade in the sexual exploitation of women and girls, with a specific focus on South America. The screening was followed by a lively panel discussion featuring director Mabel Lozano, Rocio Mora of APRAMP (a Spanish anti-trafficking NGO), Irish survivor activist Mia de Faoite, RTE's Della Kilroy and Ruhama's CEO Sarah Benson. The event was attended by a large crowd and was successful in raising awareness and promoting debate around the economic and sexual exploitation of women and girls in post-colonial South America, exposing the acute feminisation of poverty across the continent, and drawing parallels with the sexual exploitation of women in Ireland.

In the Autumn of 2017, Ruhama collaborated with Dutch artist Marian van der Zwaan on an exciting and innovation project entitled **A Penny for Your Thoughts**. This was a multi-city art project designed to raise awareness of sex trafficking and to capture the responses of sex buyers to a woman revealing her exploitative situation. Marian designed six posters for six countries (Ireland, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Portugal and Romania). Each poster featured a woman's silhouette, a live phone number and a name. In Dublin, Andreea's image was displayed, with the generous support of Dublin City Council, in three city centre locations as well as in bars, universities and via a number of online advertisements. Viewers could call the number underneath 'Andreea's' silhouette. They were greeted by a voicemail message from a bubbly Eastern European woman who promised a fun time. But her story quickly took a dark turn when she revealed that she had in fact been trafficked into Ireland's sex trade. Callers were invited to share their thoughts on 'Andreea's' situation by leaving a message.



"Some people say this is 'the game' but it's not a game. This is my life and I hate it. I don't want to be here anymore, but I don't know what to do. And I'm not the only girl that this is happening to. What do you think? Please, leave me a message and tell me."

'Andreea'

The project ran for 20 days in Dublin and all phone engagement with 'Andreea' was recorded. The initiative made national press and on EU Anti-Trafficking Day in October Ruhama attended a conference in Brussels to share the results of A Penny for Your Thoughts from the Irish perspective. We highlighted what the project revealed about the attitudes of men who buy sex in Ireland and why laws targeting sex buyers are essential in order to curb the demand that fuels the sex trade both domestically and internationally.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICE

During 2017 Ruhama continued to provide free, dedicated training to a wide range of professionals. This includes the *Know Sex Trafficking* training originally developed as part of the European Union funded REACH Project. This training is aimed at professionals who do not have the capacity, nor the requirement, to be 'experts' in sex trafficking, but who do need to be equipped to identify the signs of sex trafficking, and understand how to respond in a safe, proactive, victim-centred way.

Additionally, in 2017, Ruhama continued to deliver its bespoke training to An Garda Síochána, which focuses on the need to recognise the vulnerabilities and risks faced by those in prostitution, and to respond respectfully and empathetically to them as actual or potential victims of crime, rather than offenders. During the year we successfully trained **265 professionals** from backgrounds as diverse as social work, migrant support, drug support, mental health, women's support services, the corporate world and the police – with over **200 members of An Garda Síochána trained** during the year.

VOLUNTEERING AT RUHAMA

MAKING AN IMPACT; CHANGING LIVES

It would be impossible to deliver the breadth and depth of support we currently do at Ruhama without the essential and invaluable contribution made to our service by our dedicated volunteers. Our trained and highly-experienced volunteers are true agents of change and do vital work in empowering those who access our services to overcome trauma and realise their potential. Working in close collaboration with our staff team, in 2017 **45 volunteers** contributed **1,996 hours** (the equivalent of **285 full working days**) to the provision of a variety of Ruhama's key services including:

- Outreach to women in street prostitution
- Counselling
- Art therapy
- Holistic therapies
- Group course facilitation
- English language tuition
- Literacy and numeracy tuition
- IT classes
- Study support
- Preparation for third level
- Career guidance counselling and coaching
- CV and interview skills
- Befriending
- Communications, awareness raising and research
- IT and administrative support.

We wish to thank the volunteer team, who once again gave generously of their time, energy, skills and commitment to supporting the women we serve and changing their lives for the better. Here some of our volunteers describe the impact of their crucial work:



“One of the things which I feel makes my work worthwhile is to see the women take control of their lives. For many of them they have been controlled by others. Now they can make decisions for themselves... as strong women. It's great to notice the change in the women after experiencing Art Therapy. They are much stronger, have plans for the future and they can see beyond their past experiences.”

Art therapist volunteer

“I'm part of an organisation that empowers women to reclaim their own power and to have a sense of agency over their lives. Many of the women who access Ruhama's services live chaotic lives. They can be very stressed, worried, vulnerable. The experience of holistic therapy gives the women 'time out' in a safe space to self-care, to de-stress, to relax; to unburden cares...”

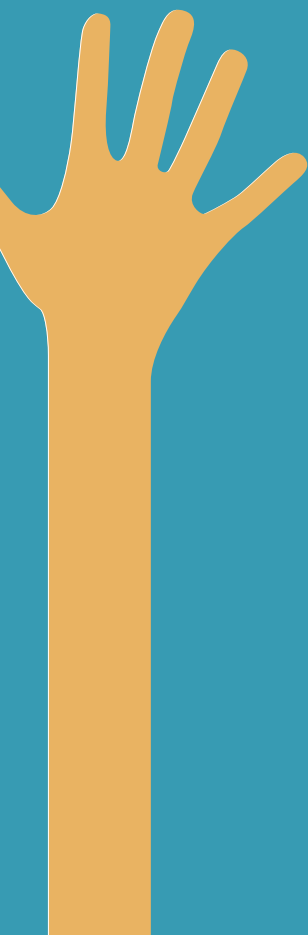
Massage therapist volunteer

“That women are willing to engage with us, have the tea... look for the women's health packs, tell us their stories and allow us to support them – this all makes an impact. As soon as we engage a woman, we are removing her from being on the street for however long that engagement is...because the women know we are there for them that night, and nobody else might have been all week.”

Outreach volunteer

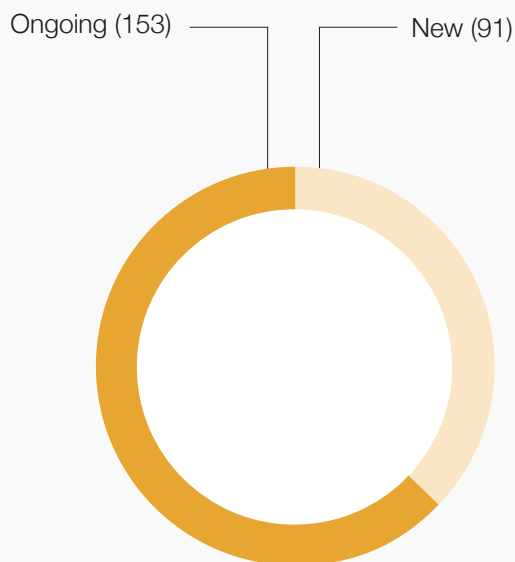
“One of the reasons that I continue to do this work is the fact that the women come back for more and that it works for them...Occasionally the women do not have English language skills and as this therapy doesn't demand a conversation it can be done with just relaxing music playing in the background. At other times some of the repressed emotions come to the fore and I try to offer a listening ear. I think that this therapy complements some of the more academic classes that are offered.”

Reflexologist volunteer

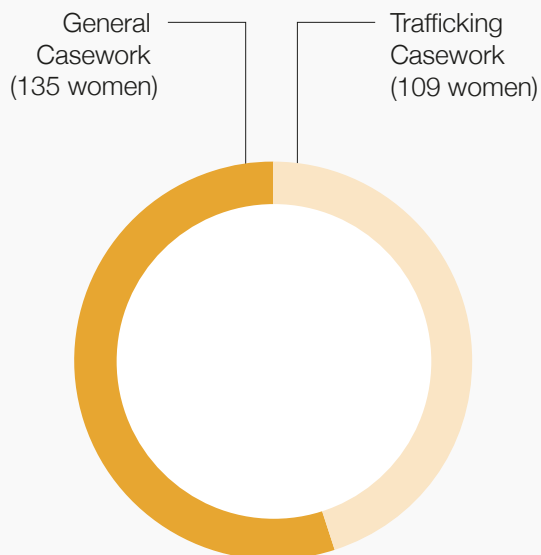


STATISTICS FOR 2017

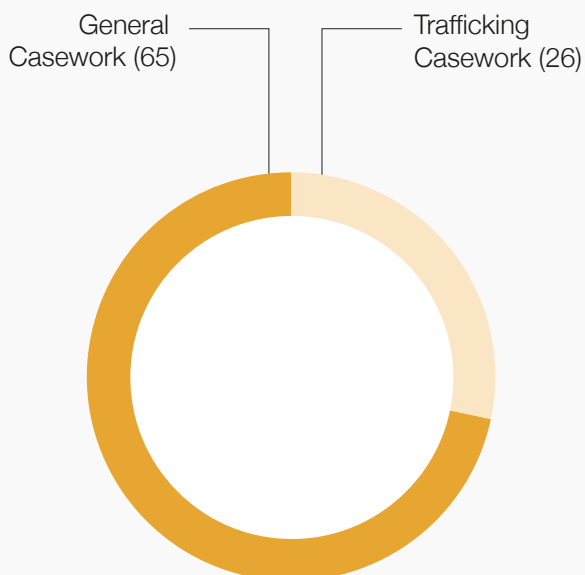
CASEWORK CASES: 244



TYPE OF CASEWORK: 244

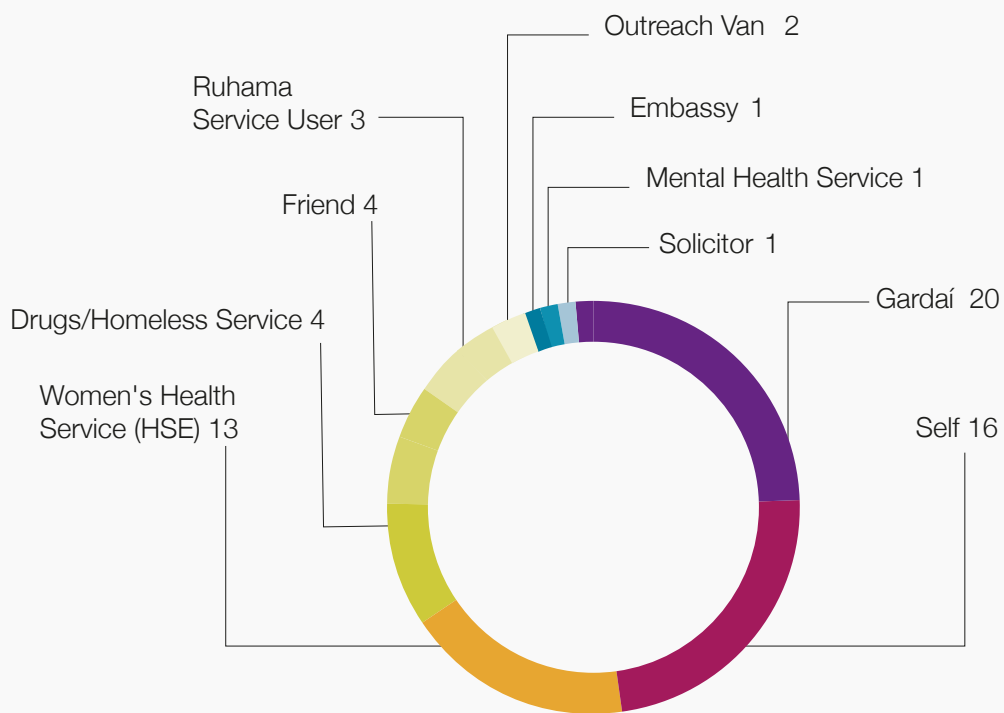


NEW REFERRALS: 91



EXPERIENCE OF PROSTITUTION: NEW REFERRAL SOURCES

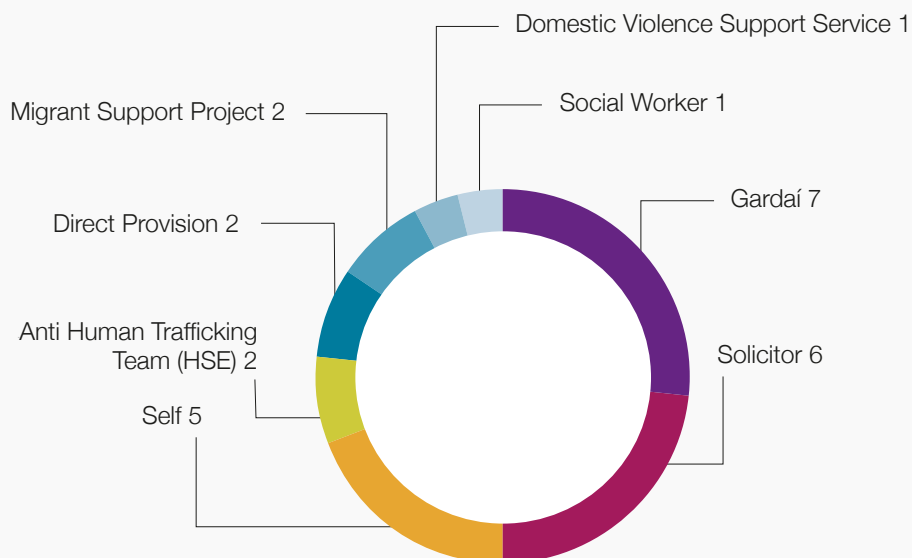
Referral sources for all new cases of those in prostitution in 2017: 65



Gardaí 20 | Self 16 | Women's Health Service (HSE) 13 | Drugs/Homeless Service 4 | Friend 4 | Ruhama Service User 3
 | Outreach Van 2 | Embassy 1 | Mental Health Service 1 | Solicitor 1 = 65

VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING: NEW REFERRAL SOURCES

Referral sources for all new cases of victims of trafficking in 2017 = 26



Gardaí 7 | Solicitor 6 | Self 5 | Anti Human Trafficking Team (HSE) 2 | Direct Provision 2
| Migrant Support Project 2 | Domestic Violence Support Service 1 | Social Worker 1 = 26

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2017

Ruhama is a company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital.

Income and expenditure 2017

Annual funding	2017 €	2016 €
Anti-Human Trafficking Unit; Department of Justice and Equality	310,000	275,000
HSE	118,824	118,824
South Inner City Local Drugs Task Force (HSE)	100,824	100,824
ESF/PEIL Bridge to Work	26,376	-
Other grant income	87,759	75,746
Donations/fundraising	<u>97,132</u>	<u>112,576</u>
Total income	<u>740,915</u>	<u>682,970</u>
Total expenditure	<u>(723,573)</u>	<u>(647,616)</u>
Operating surplus/(deficit)	<u>17,342</u>	<u>35,354</u>
Other income and expenses		
Interest receivable	18	41
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	<u>17,360</u>	<u>35,395</u>

Balance sheet as at 31st December 2017

Fixed assets	2017 €	2016 €
Tangible assets	11,382	17,114
Debtors	9,753	7,052
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>364,324</u>	<u>330,632</u>
Totals	<u>374,077</u>	<u>337,684</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	<u>(163,327)</u>	<u>(144,550)</u>
Net current assets	210,750	193,134
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>222,132</u>	<u>210,248</u>
Funds of the organisation		
Restricted funds	11,010	16,486
Unrestricted funds	-	18,762
Designated funds	<u>211,122</u>	<u>175,000</u>
Total Funds	<u>222,132</u>	<u>210,248</u>

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF RUHAMA

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Ruhama for the year ended 31 December 2017 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, Statement of Changes in Equity, Statement of Cashflows and the related notes, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is Irish law and FRS 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'.

This report is made solely to the company's members as a body in accordance with Section 391 of the Companies Act 2014. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters that we are required to state to them in the audit report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company or the company's members as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the Company's affairs as at 31 December 2017 and of its result for the year then ended
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland'; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2014.
- The directors have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the Company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (Ireland) (ISAs(Ireland)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of financial statements in Ireland, including the Ethical Standard issued by the Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA), and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (Ireland) require us to report to you where:

- The directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of financial statements is not appropriate; or

Other information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual report, other than the financial statements and our Auditors' report thereon. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the auditor otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report this fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinion on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2014

Based solely on the work undertaken in the course of the audit, we report that:

- In our opinion, the information given in the Directors' Report is consistent with the financial statements; and
- In our opinion, the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with the applicable legal requirements.

We have obtained all the information and explanations which we consider necessary for the purposes of our audit. In our opinion the accounting records of the Company were sufficient to permit the financial statements to be readily and properly audited, and financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the Company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report.

The Companies Act 2014 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion, the disclosures of directors' remuneration and transactions required by sections 305 to 312 of the Act are not made. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Respective responsibilities

Respective responsibilities of directors for the financial statements

As explained more fully in the Directors' Responsibility Statement on page 9 [of the Audited Accounts], the directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the directors are responsible for assessing the Company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the management either intends to liquidate the Company or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (Ireland) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the IAASA's website at: [https://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-\(Ireland\)](https://www.iaasa.ie/Publications/ISA-700-(Ireland)). The description forms part of our Auditor's Report.

Timothy Carthy
for and on behalf of
Duignan Carthy O'Neill Limited
Chartered Accountants
& Registered Auditors
84 Northumberland Road
Dublin 4.

Date: 30th May 2018

COMMITMENT TO GOVERNANCE

In addition to ensuring high quality service delivery, Ruhama is always striving to ensure excellent governance and practice as a registered Charity. Ruhama:

- Is an adherent to the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising and has made further, excellent progress 'on the journey' to full sign-up to the Governance Code
- Has fulfilled all obligations under the Lobbying Act 2015 and to the Charities Regulatory Authority
- Has developed a clear code of governance for the Ruhama Board of Directors to ensure best practice in this regard
- Maintains transparency and full reporting to our many diverse grant makers.

REMUNERATION OF RUHAMA STAFF

Financial reporting at present requires that we list the number of staff members who earn over €0,000 per annum in our accounts. At present one salary exceeds this amount in Ruhama, however; we note all salary levels below in the interests of transparency.

During 2017 Ruhama had a paid staff team of 14 employees, four of whom were employed full-time. Our whole-time equivalent was 10.7. Salary breakdown in 2017 (*based on full-time salary rates which are pro-rated to each employee's contract hours) was as follows:

Salary per annum:	
between €0,000-€70,000	1 person*
between €0,000-€60,000	1 person*
between €0,000-€50,000	7 persons*
between €0,000-€40,000	3 persons*
between €0,000-€30,000	2 persons*

As a service organisation, our staff team delivers the vast bulk of our output through their dedicated, professional support and advocacy for women affected by prostitution and trafficking, and this is where we concentrate our resources. Nearly all our staff in 2017

operated in a frontline capacity. Nine staff worked primarily frontline in their focus (66% of total staff hours), one staff member engaged in both frontline and other work (9%) and four staff focused primarily on administration/finance/fundraising/advocacy/training and/or communications (25%). We have the support of a further three team members who assist with our administration, including reception, and are with Ruhama through the state Community Employment scheme.

We also have a trained and supervised volunteer team of between 40-45 people at any one time, without whom we could not offer the broad range of 'wrap-around services' to women. Our volunteer team ensure that we can offer unique, flexible, responsive, comprehensive support and outreach services in a holistic, but also extremely cost-effective way. In 2017 volunteers provided 1,996 hours to Ruhama's frontline services through the provision of street outreach support, education, counselling and career guidance. This incredible contribution is equivalent to 285 full working days.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

STATUTORY FUNDING

Ruhama received in excess of 50% of its funding from statutory sources in 2017, comprising:

- The Department of Justice and Equality (Anti Human Trafficking Unit)
- The HSE CH06
- The South Inner City Local Drugs and Alcohol Task Force (HSE CH07)
- The European Social Fund (ESF) under the Programme for Employability, Inclusion and Learning (PEIL), 2014-2020
- The Dormant Accounts Fund.

The remainder of Ruhama's funding is sourced through fundraising, donations and non-statutory grants.

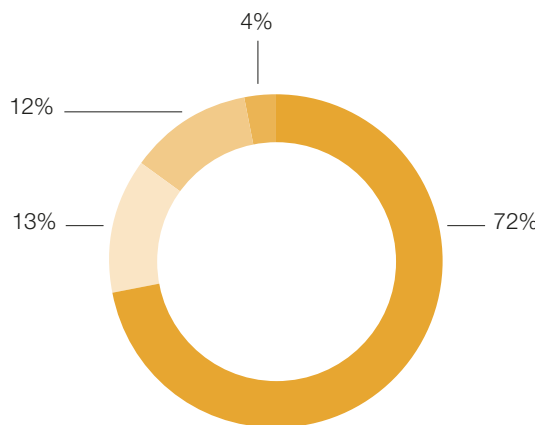
As ever, Ruhama wishes to pay tribute to all of our financial supporters, who made the work documented here a reality. From our major statutory funders and small grant-makers, to the companies who kindly assist us under their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, to those who donate small but essential amounts on a monthly or one-off basis, your support and generosity is essential to us.

We also wish to thank everyone who committed to fundraise for us in 2017, in many diverse and creative ways – from walks, mini-marathons, triathlons and

full marathons, to coffee mornings, cake sales and bake-offs, from bridge nights, exhibitions of original art work and raffles, to Christmas hampers and festive gifts for the women we support – we are truly grateful for everything you contributed.

As such, we are always working to make every cent count, and operate as efficiently and effectively as possible so that the maximum benefit goes to the women who rely on our services.

To explore the many ways in which you can support the work of Ruhama, including making a donation, please visit our website: www.ruhama.ie



FUNDING SOURCES

Ruhama's funding sources in 2017*

Statutory funding 72% | Donations/fundraising 13% | Small grants 12% | ESF/PEIL 4%



*Totals more than 100 due to rounding

CONTACT US. FOLLOW US.

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