



Ruhama

Supporting women affected by prostitution

Autumn/Winter Newsletter '19

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You can donate [here](#).

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*Check out our new website at www.ruhama.ie !**

Welcome to our new volunteers!



After receiving lots of applications throughout the summer, our new volunteers went through 3 rigorous weekends of training in September. We now have a total of 45 volunteers who deliver outreach support, education & development and counselling & other therapies.

We are so grateful for the continued hard work and dedication of Ruhama's volunteers to support women affected by prostitution!

We will open applications again in 2020. For more information on volunteering with Ruhama, visit www.ruhama.ie/volunteer

**A big thanks to Ebow for designing our fabulous new website!*

Corina's* story

I grew up in a village in an Eastern European country. My father died when I was 5, leaving behind my 2 brothers and I. My mother worked long hours in a local bar. Sometimes she would come home upset with bruises on her arms that she tried to cover, but she never told us what had happened. Often when she was working her brother would come over to the house. **When I was 8 he started to sexually abuse me.** I never told anyone because he told me they wouldn't believe me and would send me away.

When I was 15 I met my first boyfriend. He was 23, and made me feel special and taken care of. At 17 he told me he could get us jobs in Dublin, Ireland. He said we would have good lives and it would give me the chance to send money home to my mother so she could work less. So I finished school early and went to Ireland. Everything changed there. **My boyfriend got angry with me a lot and would get drunk and rape me.**

One day he told me he was taking me to his friend's house. Two men and four women were there. My boyfriend told me I had to stay and earn money to pay him back for everything he did for me. He left me and one of the men said to me: **'I know your mother, and your brothers, so if you don't do what I tell you they're dead.'** They took photos of me in my underwear and put me in a room. The other girls had their own rooms too. That night, a man came in and told me: **'You're prettier in person than in your picture on the website.'** When I started to cry he pinned me down and said: **'I've already paid for you. Don't worry, I'm a nice guy.'**

I had to see around 10 men per day for 10 months. Once a fortnight I could leave the brothel with a small bit of money to send home to my mother. **I saw a poster for Ruhama when I was out in my own language.** I went to an internet café to send a message to them and arranged a meeting for the next time I was out. When I met the woman from Ruhama, she told me she could bring me somewhere safe which she did. She gave me clothes and made sure I was comfortable. A few days later she came with me when I spoke to the Gardaí. It was scary but I was glad I did. Apparently some other women had come forward so they had enough evidence on the men, including my old boyfriend. They were arrested which put me at ease.

In the meantime **Ruhama have been helping me to rebuild my life.** I am taking English lessons, doing counselling and got a job placement in a local café to build my skills. I worry about my family's safety but they're okay. Now I can imagine a different future thanks to Ruhama.

**Name changed to protect identity*

Marking 30 years on the frontline!



2019 marks 30 years since Ruhama began as a small outreach van, going out to Dublin's red-light districts to link in with an invisible population: women in prostitution.

3 decades later, women affected by prostitution are still mostly invisible & marginalised in Irish society, but we have supported thousands of women to overcome the trauma of commercial sexual exploitation.

We will continue to work towards our feminist vision of a gender-equal world free from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

Panel Discussion

We launched two days of events with a panel discussion at the Mansion House with Ruhama and survivor members and colleagues of SPACE International: Rachel Moran (Ireland); Mickey Meji (South Africa); Nikki Bell (USA) & Melanie Thompson (USA).

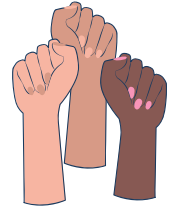


Celebration 🎉

We continued in the Mansion House with a celebration for service users, volunteers & staff. We heard an inspiring testimony from a former service user, the amazing Emmet Kirwan performed two spoken-word pieces, including 'Heartbreak' and we danced & sang the night away!



Conference: *The Sexual Violence of Prostitution & Pornography.*



On the 28th of November we held a conference in the RCSI. Throughout the day we heard from survivors, frontline agencies, and policy makers about the gendered violence of the sex trade and the need for both prevention and response mechanisms.

We had a wonderful turnout and exceptionally powerful speakers who reminded the audience that Ireland is seen around the world as a potential model for progress, and must take seriously its responsibilities to protect those in the sex trade and hold their exploiters accountable. Minister for Justice & Equality Charlie Flanagan delivered closing remarks. A massive thank you to all who came!



Photos by Moya Nolan and Ruhamá



THANK YOU

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to:

Dropbox

A team from Dropbox came in to help spruce up our offices in November! They spent hours painting our offices on Camden Street. Thank you all so much - you helped to create an even more welcoming space for the women we work with!



PayPal

PayPal have shown us wonderful support in 2019: from naming us a Chosen Charity, to developing a fundraising plugin during their Hackathon, to supporting women to build skills to enter the workplace, and donating gifts for women and their children this Christmas! Thank you all!



International Women's Club, Dublin

Áine, Angela & Lisa from the IWCD dropped in many Dunnes Stores vouchers for our service users for Christmas! These will make an incredible difference in the lives of women & their families this Christmas. Thank you for the extremely generous donation!



To everyone else who supported us in any way during 2019, we are so grateful! All your support makes a real, lasting impact on the lives of marginalised women in Ireland.



Trauma recovery & wellness

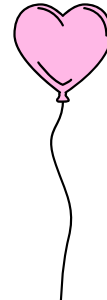
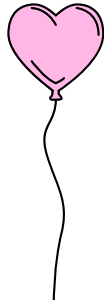


Prostitution has a severe impact on women's emotional & psychological health and wellbeing. Many of our service users experience anxiety, depression, dissociation and PTSD.



Our supports include counselling & other holistic therapies and trauma healing programmes such as Capacitar. We also recently hosted a Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) session, a process anyone can use to monitor their own mental health with a self-designed plan & make the changes they need to benefit themselves & aid recovery.

Farewell!



In the second half of 2019, we said goodbye to 3 fantastic women who have continued their careers nationally and internationally in the area of policy & frontline work on violence against women, including commercial sexual exploitation.

Sam, Meredith & Kay: thank you all so much for all your hard work, dedication and feminist solidarity with women impacted by the sex trade. We are excited to see what the future holds for you all!



Wishing all our service-users, staff, volunteers & supporters a very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

