

RUHAMA

Annual Report 2016



Supporting Women Affected by Prostitution
Upholding women's human rights





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CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



On behalf of the Board of Ruhama, I am very pleased to present this report on the work of the organisation during 2016.

During the year, Ruhama supported 304 women affected by prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The support provided varied depending on need but could involve anything from a cup of tea and

a chat in the Outreach Van on a cold night, to full casework involving counselling, provision of a safe place to stay, and assistance with the police, immigration authorities and social welfare.

There is undoubtedly a continuing and growing need for Ruhama's services. While prostitution has largely moved off the streets into anonymous apartments, massage parlours and suburban housing estates, it seems to have become quite pervasive in Ireland over the past few years. Unfortunately, 'off-street' prostitution is easier for criminal gangs to control and well suited to the exploitation of vulnerable women through trafficking. Out of sight is out of mind and the women are often, literally, trapped. Ruhama, we hope, provides some realistic chance of escape.

In this context, it is worth reiterating Ruhama's view that prostitution and trafficking are inextricably linked. Women (and girls) are frequently brought to Ireland into brothels under false pretences, by blackmail and by coercion. A woman 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. Contrary to popular belief, she could also be Irish or a citizen of an EU Member State.

While Ruhama's primary focus is the women who engage with us, the organisation also recognises that there is a need for systemic change. We work very hard to advocate and lobby for legislation and human rights based policies in this respect. 2016 was a particularly significant year for us as this work bore fruit. The Sexual Offences Bill made very significant progress throughout this period, and was eventually enacted in March 2017. This essential new legislation, for which Ruhama had long advocated, 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. So called 'sex work' is rarely a free choice, but rather a result of circumstances such as poverty, trafficking or drug addiction.

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

Finally, I would, on a personal basis, also like to thank my colleagues on the Board of Directors for their support and significant contribution to the development of Ruhama during 2016, and to convey my genuine appreciation for the work of each member of the growing Ruhama team, led by CEO Sarah Benson, including the growing number of volunteers.

Colm O'Dwyer SC
Chairman of Ruhama

RUHAMA'S BOARD

Colm O'Dwyer (Chairperson)
 Valerie Judge (Secretary)
 Catherine Clancy
 Donal Dunlop (appointed January 2017)
 Breda Flood (resigned July 2016)
 Margaret Lynch
 Ethna McDermott
 Myriam McLaughlin
 Jennie O'Reilly (appointed March 2017)
 Mary Scully
 Zulimah Wallis (resigned December 2016)

FOREWORD



I am delighted to present Ruhama's Annual Report for 2016. During this year we supported **304 women** affected by prostitution and trafficking through our wide range of specialist services, which are delivered nationwide. **222 women** benefitted from our intensive casework support this year, including **92 victims of sex trafficking**. A further 82 were supported through our street outreach service, or with non-casework support.

As always, those who came through our doors during 2016 were from all over the world, reflecting the truly global nature of Ireland's commercial sex trade. We supported women of **37 different nationalities** in casework, from **four continents**. Some women fled economic crises, conflict and terrible poverty in the hopes of a better opportunity, only to find themselves on this small island on the other side of the world from their homes – in Ireland's brothels. Precarious migration has a disproportionately dangerous effect on women and girls who can be subject to trafficking or channelled through other routes into prostitution.

As has always been the case since our foundation in 1989, our services are offered on a **free and confidential** basis. Seeking to exit prostitution is not a requirement to access Ruhama's support, nor is fluency in English or a valid immigration visa.

Women come to us with a broad range of needs. In 2016 we responded to requests for information on rights, help with complex legal and immigration problems, housing support, education services, career advice, counselling, and assistance with many other issues that can be part of the often-complex lives led by women affected by prostitution and trafficking. Through **1,719 face-to-face interactions, 11,307 support calls and 7,792 text contacts** we responded to women in a person-centred manner, dictated by their own individual goals and wishes.

This work is never without its challenges and in 2016 Ruhama's service users experienced many, including hardships presented by the current housing crisis, barriers to trauma recovery and stability created by immigration restrictions such as the Habitual Residence Condition, and serious risks posed by criminals who held some women in dangerous, exploitative situations through threats, debt bondage and other means.

At the heart of our work is affirming every woman's right to society's protection and respect, regardless of her circumstances or the exploitation she may have suffered. Ruhama seeks to defend women's and girls' human rights through our broader advocacy work at home and abroad. This is continually shaped by the experiences and needs of the hundreds of women we support each year. 2016 was a landmark year for the evolution of Ireland's new legislation to reduce the harms of the sex trade. In addition to outlawing the purchase of sex as part of the **Turn Off the Red Light Campaign**, we were also successful in securing the decriminalisation of women who sell sex in street locations, thereby removing previously unjust laws that effectively criminalised women for being sexually exploited.¹

On both the domestic and international stages, Ruhama was enormously proud to continue collaborations with survivors of prostitution and trafficking: working in solidarity with them in various ways in 2016 to raise their voices against the harms of the sex trade. Without doubt, many of the advocacy gains made in 2016 would not have been possible without their vital contributions.

Furthermore, none of our achievements in 2016 would have been possible were it not for the support of a host of individuals and agencies who firmly believe in what we do. A sincere thanks to our funders and generous donors, who keep our doors open. We also acknowledge the importance of collaborative working with our many essential partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors. Thanks too to all our staff and volunteers, who help to realise the invaluable work of Ruhama through their boundless energy and dedication. As ever, we were ably supported and guided by our highly committed Board of Directors, making great strides in 2016 in further strengthening our commitment to excellent governance.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the women who use our services, both past and present. Our whole team are inspired and warmed by the creativity, ingenuity and sheer determination you demonstrate to us every day. Ruhama wishes for a world free from commercial sexual exploitation; for full equality of opportunity and outcomes for women and girls. Until this is achieved we will remain in support and in solidarity with those who need us.

Sarah Benson

Chief Executive Officer, Ruhama

¹ the Sexual Offences Act was finally commenced in March 2017

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 a variety of women, including transgender women, who have been affected by prostitution at any time in their lives. This includes women 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 women with these experiences on a nationwide basis.

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

How we work



Fundamental to Ruhama's work is the recognition of sexual exploitation as a serious violation of women's human rights. This position is based on our 27 years of work supporting women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking, and listening to the experiences they have shared with us. For so many women, prostitution has deprived them of their human right to dignity, equality, autonomy and physical and mental wellbeing. It has violated their bodily integrity, and in doing so left them traumatised. When women come to us for support, much of the work is about helping them to recover their liberty and dignity; to be able to assert their rights and live a new life free from abuse and control.

Upholding prostituted women's **rights to assistance, recovery and justice** is central to Ruhama's work. Whilst the women we support may have been 'victims' of sexual exploitation, they are also survivors, and our work is focused on building their capacity to exercise their human rights and shape their own lives and futures.

"My confidence is growing... my power was stolen from me but now I'm getting it back."

Leonora*, Ruhama service user

Prostitution is an inherently gendered phenomenon – the vast majority of those who are bought and sold for sex across the globe are women and girls. This is why we take a **gender-sensitive approach** to our work – recognising that the empowerment of women is essential to tackling and preventing sexual exploitation. Supporting women, including previously vulnerable and disenfranchised women, to fully participate in society and reach their potential are vital steps in achieving gender equality.

Grounded in this analysis of prostitution are the **guiding principles** that have always informed Ruhama's work:

- Providing a non-judgmental 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

As our Mission attests, Ruhama is working at both individual and societal levels to tackle sexual exploitation. At the core of our work are the direct services we provide to the women who need our support. We are also very active in advocating for social, political and legal measures that uphold these women's rights, and contribute to the national and international fight against the global sex trade. This report outlines our achievements in both of these areas of work in 2016.

What we provide

The crux of Ruhama's work is the direct support we provide to women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking. All our services are offered on a **free and confidential basis**. Our primary objective is to provide useful supports to women. This is why we operate a 'person-centred' model of service, led by each individual's priority needs.

The types of support we provide are wide-ranging and holistic, reflecting the often-complex needs and recovery process of women who have experienced prostitution and trafficking.

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

An out-of-hours emergency response



Support with immigration issues and repatriation



Interpretive support



Crisis accommodation in emergency situations



"A primary way of protecting the human rights of commercially sexually exploited individuals is to provide services and exit strategies should they opt to leave the sex trade and hold their exploiters accountable."

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International

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. Our services are constantly

evolving in light of the feedback we receive from the women we support.

Seeking to exit prostitution is **not** a requirement to access Ruhama's support, nor is fluency in English or a valid immigration visa.

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



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



Emotional and psychological supports, including:

- Counselling
- Holistic therapies
- Addiction support

Support for women involved in the criminal justice process



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



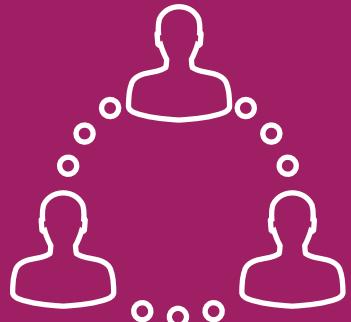
In 2016, Ruhama
supported a total of

304
women

with a broad range of services

KEY STATISTICS

In 2016, Ruhama supported a total of 304 women in a variety of different ways.



THE NEED FOR OUR SERVICES IN 2016

63

Women received street outreach support

99

Women accessed Ruhama's Casework Services for the first time, of whom:

- 73 women received general casework support
- 26 women received casework support as victims of trafficking

222*

Women received casework support, of whom:

- 130 women received general casework support
- 92 women received casework support as victims of trafficking

79

Women received Education & Development support

53

Women benefited from our dedicated Housing & Welfare service

1,038

Staff and volunteer hours of street outreach were delivered over 130 nights

1,719

Face-to-face contacts were made

7,792

SMS contacts were made**

26

Women received support, but did not access outreach or casework

11,307

Telephone contacts were made**

*7 women accessed both street outreach and casework support

**phone contacts to and on behalf of women

STREET OUTREACH



CREATING A CONNECTION

The majority of the women Ruhama supports are involved in the indoor sex trade in a wide variety of locations including brothels, massage parlours, hotels, houses and apartments. Nonetheless, there is also a cohort of often very vulnerable women involved in on-street prostitution. To connect with this group, Ruhama operates a dedicated street outreach service, up to four nights per week, with the help of our specially adapted van.

Ruhama's outreach van took to the streets of Dublin's 'red light' areas on **130 nights** in 2016, reaching out to a total of **63 women** involved in street prostitution. The van is a safe space where women can access very practical supports such as hot drinks, snacks, hats and gloves and health and safety supplies, alongside much-needed emotional support and onward referrals to our own and other specialist services.

As ever, the women in street prostitution we encountered in 2016 were often leading complex and sometimes chaotic lives. They were typically facing a range of vulnerabilities and challenges including poor physical and mental health, domestic violence, substance use issues, poverty and debt, and homelessness or the risk of it. They also had to cope with serious dangers whilst selling sex on the street – many women reported being threatened, robbed, and physically or sexually assaulted.

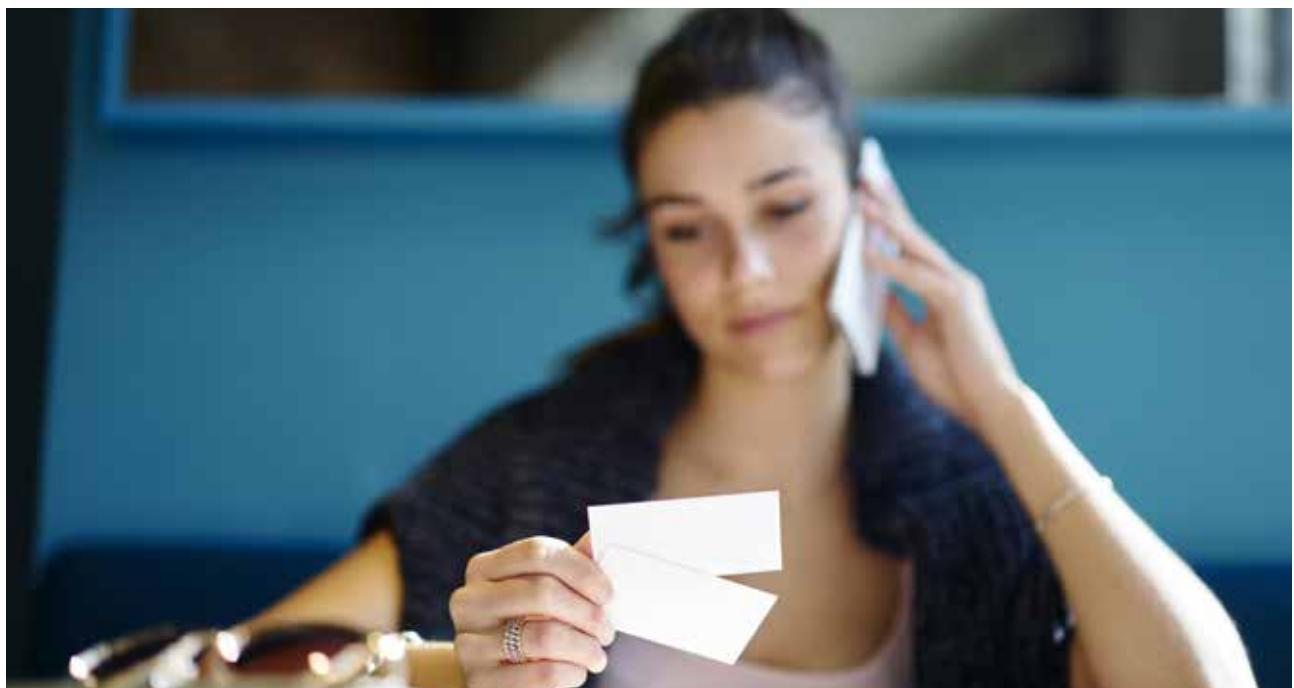
For most of the women we encounter on the streets, the van is a place for a short rest and the chance to meet a friendly face. But while a smile and a warm drink are always welcome, our presence on the streets is also to remind these women, no matter how marginalised, that they are valued and that their safety and wellbeing matter. Regular contact with the women on the streets allows

"That act of kindness meant the world to me out there in that disturbing world I felt so trapped in... And I knew if I could meet the good on that street, there must be so much more of it off that street and if I ever made it out, I would try and find it..."

Mia de Faote, prostitution survivor and activist

us to build up a rapport and encourage them to access the other specialist services we provide.

CASEWORK AND CARE PLANNING



EMPOWERING WOMEN TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

In 2016 **222 women** accessed Ruhama's in-depth casework support; **99** of whom engaged with this service for the first time. The goal of this work is to provide practical assistance and support women in overcoming the trauma of sexual exploitation, asserting their human rights and regaining control over their own lives.

Guided by her dedicated case worker, each woman is the principal author of her own care plan. This personalised care plan addresses all of the areas of her life where she would like to make positive change, and forms the basis of the holistic and practical support that each woman will then receive from Ruhama. As part of the care planning process each woman is assisted to set her own realistic goals and make informed decisions about her future.

"I have experienced so much sadness, but I'm a strong, vibrant, happy person. I'm not struggling and barely coming through the smoke; I'm victorious, jumping and shouting. I have bumps and bruises, but I have overcome what happened to me."

Tiffany Mester, Human Trafficking overcomer and activist

In all cases, the support provided is flexible and adaptable according to the women's needs. Importantly, all of the support Ruhama provides is non-judgemental, 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 2016 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**, and **referrals from our outreach van**, our main external referral sources for 2016 included the **HSE Women's Health Service, An Garda Síochána** and **solicitors** – all vital groups of professionals in terms of the identification and assistance of women who are being exploited in prostitution.

Referral sources for all new cases in 2016

Self	22
Women's Health Service (HSE)	18
Gardaí	17
Solicitor	11
Outreach Van	7
Direct Provision	4
Domestic Violence Support Service	4
Ruhama Service User	4
Friend	3
Social Worker	3
Anti Human Trafficking Team (HSE)	2
Crisis Pregnancy Agency	1
Homeless Service	1
Member of the Public	1
Rape Crisis Centre	1
Total	99

222

women were supported in casework in 2016, originating from 37 different nations

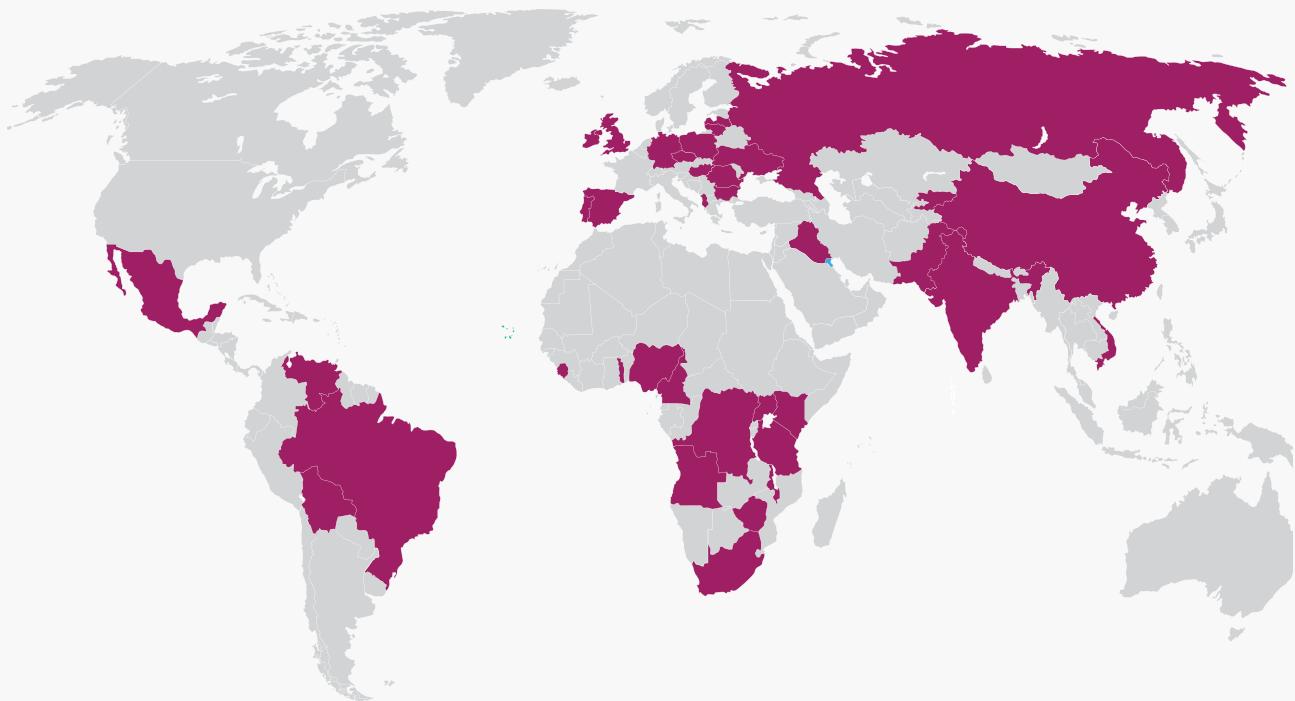
Reflecting the global nature of the international sex trade, in 2016 we again supported women from South America, Asia, Africa, Western and Eastern Europe – in fact the 222 women we supported in casework during the year originated from **37 different countries** across the world. The women accessing casework in 2016 most commonly originated from:

- Ireland (56 women)
- Nigeria (47 women)
- Brazil (28 women)
- Romania (20 women)

To ensure our services are as accessible as possible to those we serve, Ruhama's casework team is multi-lingual and we also provide access to interpreters if required. Clearly civil, political and economic instabilities in women's home countries leave many very vulnerable to exploitation, and the potential to be trafficked. Those who accessed our casework service in 2016 included **92 women** who are victims of sex trafficking, originating from **23 different nations**.

FIGURE 1

Nationalities of all women accessing Ruhama's Casework service (222 women of 37 different nationalities)

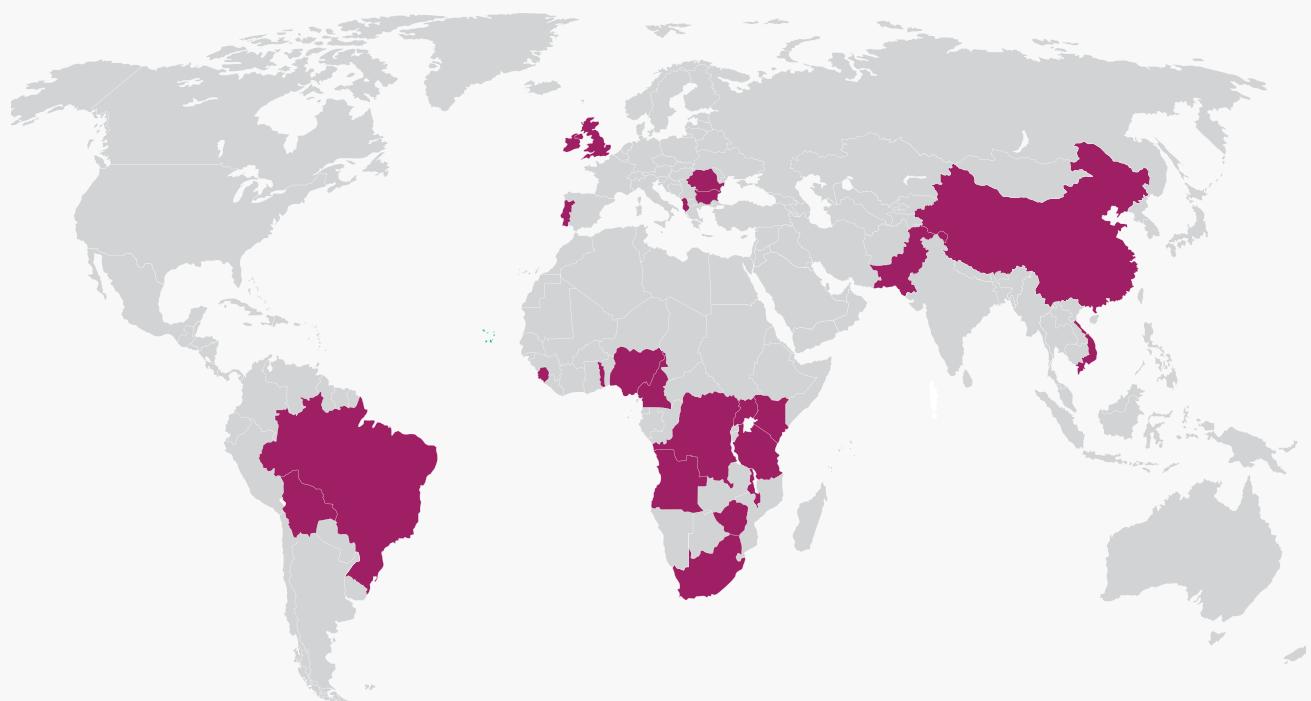


Ireland	56	Portugal	3	Mexico	1
Nigeria	47	Angola	2	Poland	1
Brazil	28	Bolivia	2	Russia	1
Romania	20	China	2	Sierra Leone	1
United Kingdom	6	Congo DRC	2	Tanzania	1
Zimbabwe	6	Germany	2	Togo	1
Spain	4	Kenya	2	Ukraine	1
Uganda	4	Pakistan	2	Venezuela	1
Albania	3	South Africa	2	Vietnam	1
Bulgaria	3	India	1		
Cameroon	3	Iraq	1		
Czech Republic	3	Kurdistan	1		
Hungary	3	Latvia	1		
Malawi	3	Lithuania	1		

222

FIGURE 2

Nationalities of all victims of trafficking accessing Ruhama's Casework service (92 women of 23 different nationalities)



Nigeria	43	China	1
Brazil	8	Ireland	1
Romania	5	Portugal	1
Zimbabwe	5	Sierra Leone	1
Albania	3	South Africa	1
Bulgaria	3	Tanzania	1
Uganda	3	Togo	1
Angola	2	United Kingdom	1
Cameroon	2	Vietnam	1
Congo DRC	2		
Kenya	2		
Malawi	2		
Pakistan	2		
Bolivia	1		

92



“Like me, some of us end up homeless, if we left the brothel we live in, or the pimp ‘boyfriend’ or we simply lost our homes when we stop making the rent. Prostitution, if it is anything, is a choice between homelessness and having men we don’t like, do things we hate...”

Rae Story, prostitution survivor and activist

HOUSING AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE

ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHT TO A SAFE HOME

In addition to our casework support, Ruhama also provides dedicated one-to-one assistance with housing and social welfare issues for those women who need more intensive support in this regard.

A safe place to stay is a basic human right, but in the context of the current housing crisis in Ireland this right is becoming more and more difficult to assert, especially for those who are marginalised in any way. The importance of a safe space that one can really call 'home' cannot be underestimated for women overcoming the trauma of sexual exploitation, yet many women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking have been rendered invisible when it comes to the right to secure a safe and affordable home. Our advocacy in this area focuses on ensuring that women's rights and entitlements in this regard are upheld.

In 2016, **53 women** availed of our dedicated housing and welfare support service, which included very practical help with things like opening bank accounts, completing paperwork, undertaking property searches and viewings, and providing small grants to assist with rental deposits and basic homewares. 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 households independently.

Once again this year, women faced a series of challenges in securing a safe place to stay, including:

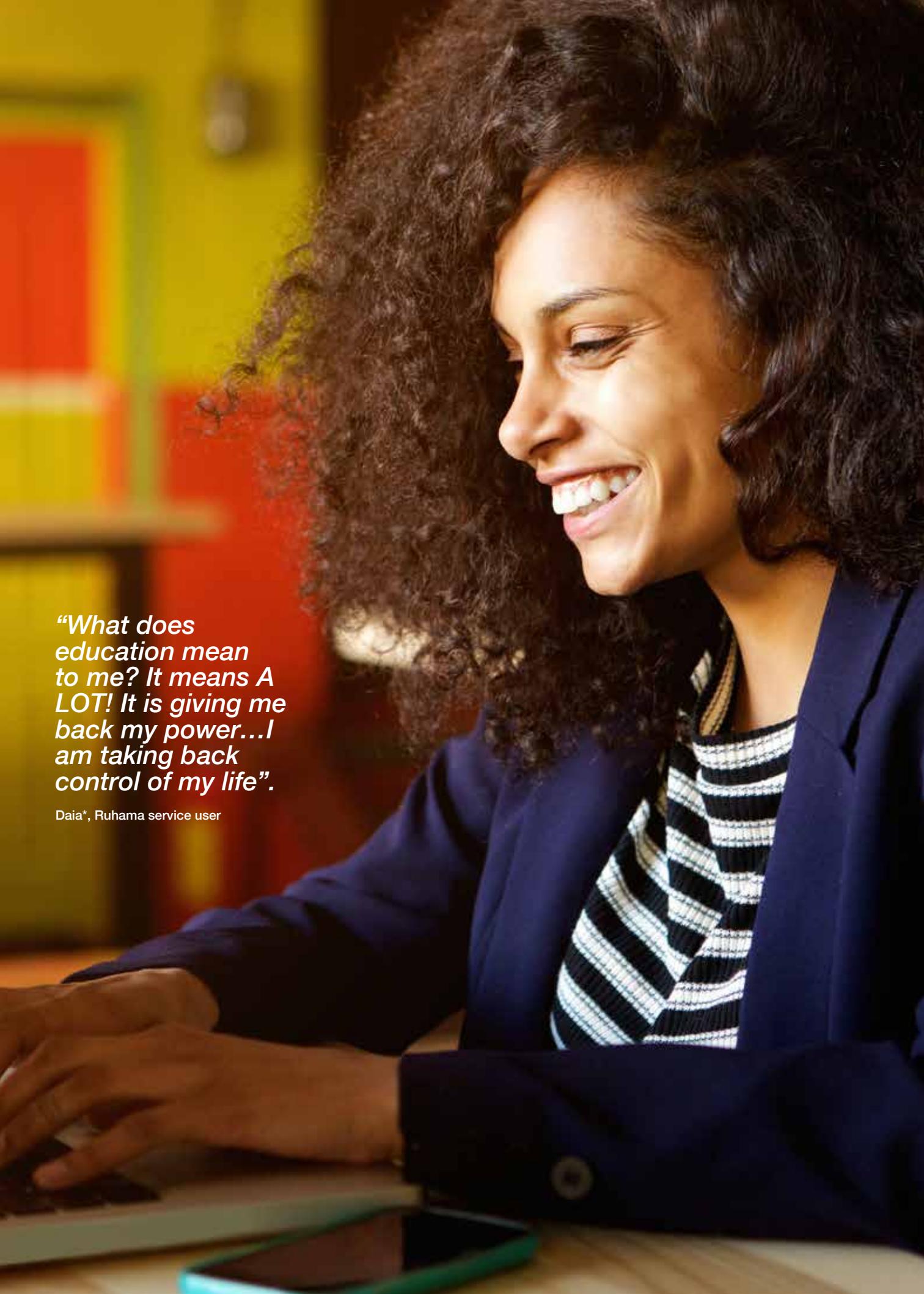
- Exorbitant rental costs, which leads some to stay in prostitution in order to keep up with payments

- A lack of both women-only and/or drug-free hostels for homeless women in prostitution who need a safe environment in which to stay, and who may additionally be trying to overcome addiction
- Serious difficulties in saving a month's rent in advance – particularly for victims of trafficking leaving Direct Provision who have previously been surviving on €19.10 per week
- Local authority housing requirements that exclude migrant women because they have not been living in Ireland with permission for the required five years, and do not highly rate a history of sexual violence and exploitation as factors to be considered in a woman's need for housing

In 2016, Ruhama worked hard with and on behalf of women to address all of these challenges head-on. But as ever, we could not do it all alone – collaborative working is vital in this area, and we know that homes could not have been secured without the assistance and commitment of a number of other 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 2016 to be able to offer 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 2016,
53
women
availed
of our
housing
and
welfare
support
service

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark, curly hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a striped shirt. Her hands are visible on a laptop keyboard in the foreground. The background is blurred, showing warm colors like red and yellow.

*"What does
education mean
to me? It means A
LOT! It is giving me
back my power...I
am taking back
control of my life".*

Daia*, Ruhama service user

EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Ruhama's diverse and innovative Education and Development Programme is designed specifically to support women affected by prostitution and trafficking to achieve personal, social and economic autonomy. The Programme facilitates women to explore their potential, while at the same time opening up alternatives to prostitution, if that is their objective. Our Programme supports women to assert their basic human rights to education and the opportunity to pursue their desired career path. In 2016, **79 women** availed of Ruhama's Education and Development Programme, accessing a wide variety of opportunities, 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
- Coaching
- Interview skills
- CV and cover letter design: development
- Support with course and job applications
- Jewellery-making
- Sewing skills

Women also had the opportunity to avail of Ruhama's specialist group courses, typically run twice annually, which have been designed to build women's self-confidence and self-efficacy and give them the tools for making effective 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

- STEPS (Steps to Excellence for Personal Success) – which develops and enhances participants' confidence to work towards building the lives they want to lead
- Shaping Your Future – which provides participants with the tools and skills necessary to support job-seeking and their professional development
- Computer/IT skills

In total, **51 women** benefited from group courses and **47** from one-to-one tuition. 2016 was a very successful year for the women who accessed Education and Development at Ruhama, with many making huge strides both personally and professionally through refining their English and IT skills, commencing and completing professionally accredited courses, obtaining university places, gaining work experience, training, work placement and small business development opportunities, and securing paid employment in their chosen fields.

Once again collaborative working was essential in the delivery of our Education and Development Programme in 2016, including valuable partnerships with education, employment support and volunteer placement services. Furthermore, the Programme as a whole could not have been delivered without the significant contributions of our very skilled teachers, trainers, coaches and facilitators.

In total,
79
women
accessed
our
Education
and
Development
Programme
in 2016

COUNSELLING AND HOLISTIC THERAPIES



OVERCOMING TRAUMA

Women accessing Ruhama's services often report having endured horrific levels of sexual, physical and psychological abuse whilst in prostitution or having been trafficked. Many have also experienced sexual and physical abuse and/or neglect as children, and domestic violence as adults. The impacts of such experiences are hugely damaging to women, many of whom speak of living in constant states of tension and fear or hopelessness. Displaying the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is not uncommon, and women's suicidal ideation is an issue that our team respond to frequently. Not being able to process and deal with trauma is identified as a

significant barrier to women's abilities to move on with their lives and achieve their goals. Therefore, in addition to our dedicated casework service, Ruhama also provides a free counselling service for those who need this extra therapeutic support. Counselling helps women to overcome the trauma of their experiences, and regain their sense of self.

All women who come to Ruhama for support are given the opportunity to avail of our one-to-one counselling service. In 2016 our counselling team consisted of four fully accredited and experienced counsellors including an Art Therapist. During 2016, **195 hours** of counselling were provided to **33**

women. Our qualified counsellors are adept at supporting women who have been involved in prostitution with a host of issues they often face, including trauma, isolation, anxiety, depression and relationship problems.

For some, recovery also involves availing of Ruhama's dedicated holistic therapies that allow women to tackle stress and enhance their sense of wellbeing. For women living with high levels of stress and anxiety, these therapies can be extremely beneficial. During 2016 **20 women** availed of **96 hours** of regular therapies such as reflexology, shiatsu, neck, shoulder and head massage provided by our two trained holistic therapists.

“The sexual exploitation I endured was almost like something that happened to someone else. If I had told myself the truth about what was being done to me, my psyche would have splintered into a million pieces... My body, mind, and spirit survived so many things for so many years.”

Autumn Burris, sex trade survivor and activist

ONE WOMAN'S STORY

My name is Omorose*. I was born in Benin, Nigeria in 1989. Both my parents died when I was very young and so I was raised by my grandmother. She could not afford to send me to school for long so I stayed with her each day selling oranges by the roadside. We worked hard, often standing in the heat for hours, but I always enjoyed her smiling company.

As a teenager I got a job in a salon. One of my customers was a glamorous businesswoman I called 'Auntie'. She offered to take me to Europe where I could work for a rich family and go to school. My grandmother did not want me to leave, but we were struggling to make ends meet and I was so excited by this vision of a 'new life' that I agreed.

In the airport Auntie gave me a document that had my picture on it, but it had a different name to mine. It was crowded and confusing at the airport and Auntie said to just trust her and follow, so I did. After three days we got through the last airport – Dublin airport. We went to a house where I was taken to a room and told to get some sleep. The next morning Auntie told me that there was a problem with the family that I was supposed to work for – they did not need me anymore. Auntie explained that I owed her a lot of money for the travel to Europe and that to pay her back I would have to work in her business: prostitution.

Every day men would come to my room, sometimes five men, sometimes ten. The only escape I found was in my mind. My eyes would go to the ceiling where I stared at a damp stain. I could leave my own body and go right up to that ceiling.

Days, weeks, months passed. It never stopped. After a while I couldn't even picture my grandmother's smile

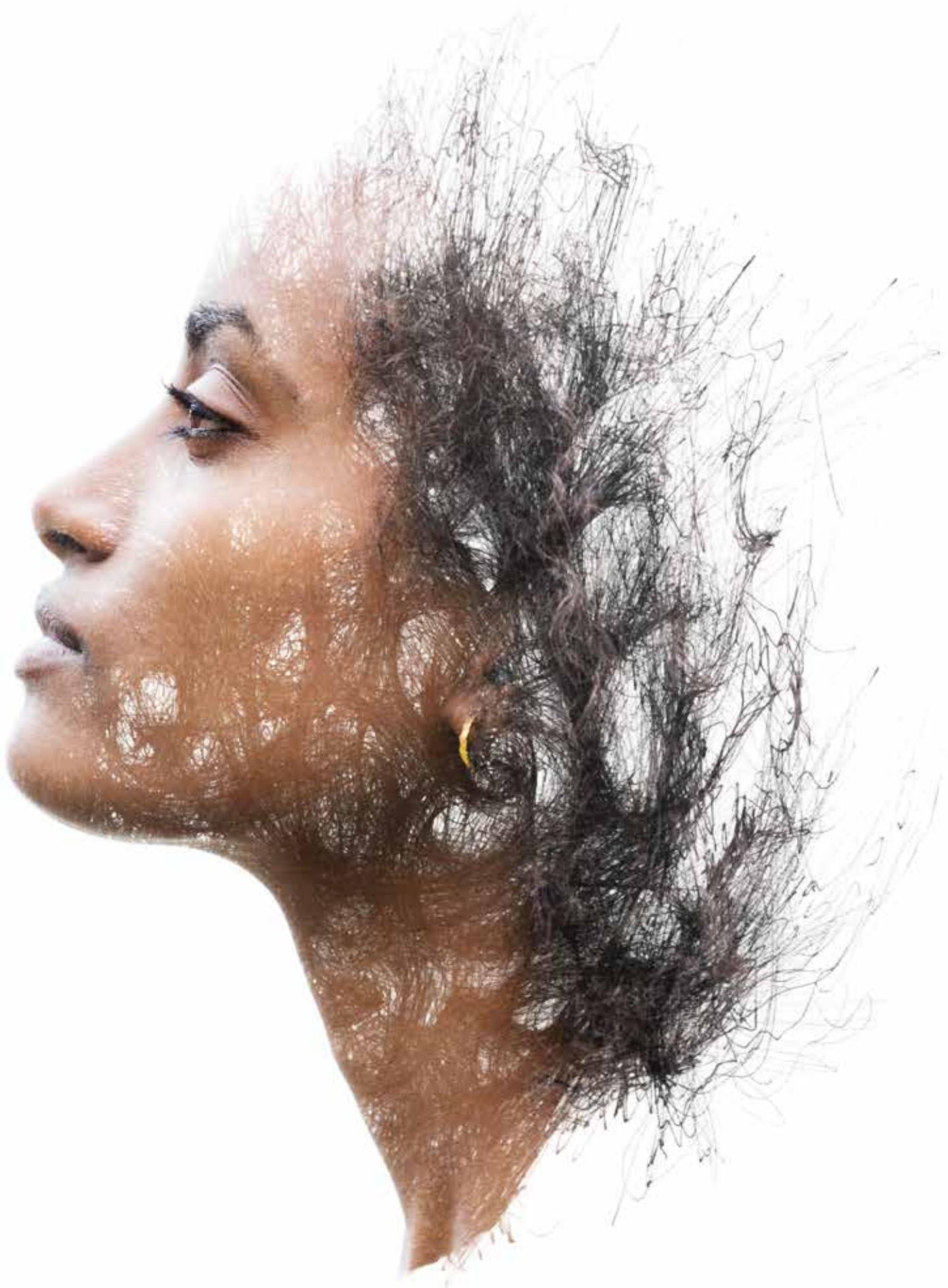
anymore and felt completely lost. Auntie and her boyfriend decided to move me to another house. On the journey there a chance came to run and I escaped. It is all a blur - I know that someone phoned the Gardaí and I felt terrified. I didn't even know where I was.

The Gardaí took me to meet a woman from Ruhama. She introduced me to my caseworker and from that moment I started to get my life back. She worked with me to organise all my papers and find somewhere safe to stay. I began to understand that what had happened to me was a crime and it was not my fault. Auntie had taken advantage of my poor background and my desire for new opportunities.

At Ruhama I took part in their Education and Development Programme. I was full of panic and tension after what happened, but here I learned to improve my coping skills and deal better with stress. I also worked hard on my literacy and started using computers for the first time – I found I was a natural! I was able to make contact with my grandmother and we were overcome when we finally spoke. It is not safe for me to return to Nigeria because of my traffickers and their network there, but we can skype now at least.

When I escaped from Auntie I felt like an empty shell. Now I have a lot more confidence in myself. I worked with Ruhama's career guidance counsellor and found that I have a lot of skills I didn't realise: now I do.

I have been with Ruhama two years, but I'm getting to a place where I don't need them anymore. I have plans and have set goals that I can actually work towards. I am training in healthcare and I'm excited for the future. What happened took away my power, my loved ones, and my love of life, but I finally have them back again.



ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING



TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Whilst our support for women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking is at the heart of what we do, through our broader advocacy work Ruhama is also striving to tackle the causes and drivers of sexual exploitation that exist in the first instance. We are doing this work at both national and international levels as part of the global struggle against the commercial sex trade. It encompasses a host 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

Some highlights of our advocacy work in 2016 are outlined here.

“All forms of sexual exploitation are a violation of fundamental human rights and human dignity. Commercial sexual exploitation is gender-based violence...made possible by unethical and ungrounded male entitlement, which disproportionately affects the most vulnerable among us. We [must] oppose language and law that allows for the dehumanization of people who have been commercially sexually exploited.”

The Carter Center, founded by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter

INFLUENCING POLICY AND LEGISLATION AT HOME

In 2016 Ruhama welcomed the long-awaited publication by the Department of Justice and Equality of the Second National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland. The Plan contains 65 actions designed to crack down on individuals and gangs involved in trafficking, to support victims, to raise public awareness, and to enhance training for those likely to encounter victims. Ruhama's CEO Sarah Benson spoke at the Plan's launch, calling on the State to urgently prioritise the revision of the identification process for victims of trafficking in Ireland.

2016 was yet another crucial year for the slow but positive progress of Ireland's *Sexual Offences Bill*[#], which contains a range of legal instruments to tackle sexual exploitation, including outlawing the purchase of sex, and tougher penalties for those who organise prostitution. In 2016, as a core member of the Turn Off the Red Light (TORL) Campaign, Ruhama led the successful call to fully repeal the offence of soliciting for prostitution. This is a vital measure that recognises the vulnerabilities and human rights violations experienced by those who sell sex on-street – women we meet through our outreach van – and the injustice of criminalising them. The repeal of this offence is now contained within the new legislation, which, coupled with the sex purchase ban, brings Ireland's prostitution laws in line with the true spirit of the long fought for 'Nordic model'.

THE IMPACT OF SURVIVOR ACTIVISTS
 These gains would have been impossible in Ireland without the determined advocacy of prostitution survivors and activists. Their work has been essential in persuading those in positions of power of the need to tackle the sex trade head on:

"The irony of working in this area as a survivor is that you have to stay inside the burning building in order to put out the flames. And there were many dark times over the last few years...but one night I got a call from a woman who was being pimped by her father. And I realised how deeply privileged I was to have any sort of voice in this, knowing that there are so so many women and girls in the country who need this law, and who needed to see people working for this law."

Aine*, Irish survivor activist

"Having survived prostitution, I know how important this law is... This [law] sends a message to the women that says: 'no, what is being done to you is actually wrong. It was always wrong and it'll no longer be accepted'. And that's a big message to the women, to any woman involved in prostitution."

Mia de Faoite, Irish survivor activist

"It's been four years since I first came to Ireland to campaign for the passing of the Sexual Offences Bill. In those four years, thousands of vulnerable women and children have been abused through prostitution in Ireland. It's reached crisis point. We can't afford to wait any longer. This legislation needs to happen now."

Fiona Broadfoot, UK survivor activist and member of SPACE International (Survivors of Prostitution-Abuse Calling for Enlightenment)

"Prostitution is the ultimate expression of social injustice. The fact that the seven teenage girls on my [street] corner were all former residents of state care homes should be evidence enough that prostitution is not populated by people who want to exercise autonomy and choice, but by those who never had any to exercise in the first place. It is the socially vulnerable who are corralled into prostitution... I would like to urge Irish politicians to take the critically important step of passing the Sexual Offences Bill."

Rachel Moran, author, Irish survivor activist and founding member of SPACE International

*names have been changed to preserve confidentiality

[#]the Sexual Offences Act was finally commenced in March 2017

INFLUENCING POLICY AND LEGISLATION ABROAD

Throughout 2016, Ruhama continued our efforts to extend our influence and expertise to other jurisdictions that are also focusing on issues of prostitution and sex trafficking. We made several key submissions in this respect, including for example:

- Contributions on trafficking in Ireland to the US State Department's annual *Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report*
- A submission to the UK Home Affairs Committee 'Inquiry into the way Prostitution is Treated in Legislation'
- A letter to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture on the extent to which the prostitution of women amounts to non-State torture
- Signatories to the joint contribution to the European Commission on the post-2016 EU Strategy on Human Trafficking, coordinated by the European Women's Lobby

RUHAMA AS A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

2016 presented a number of opportunities to progress our advocacy work to uphold the human rights of prostituted women and girls in both national and international forums.

In March, CEO Sarah Benson participated in the **60th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60)** at the United Nations in New York, as a member of the official Irish State delegation. The themes of the session were both directly relevant to Ruhama's work:

- 'Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development' (priority theme)
- 'The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls' (review theme)

Sarah met with partners, Irish permanent representatives to the UN and UN officials to discuss key policy issues relating to women and girls' empowerment and the prevention of violence.

In addition to Ruhama, Sarah was also representing **CAP International** at the

United Nations. Sarah is the current Chair of CAP – the international Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, which is a unique alliance of 22 abolitionist frontline NGOs from across the globe. At CSW60 CAP hosted its first official side event at the UN, sponsored by the French Government and entitled 'Refugees and displaced people, victims of terrorist groups: Women and girls exposed to a continuum of sexual violence and exploitation'. This event featured Nobel Peace Prize nominee Nadia Murad Basee Taha as the keynote speaker. Nadia is a survivor of sex trafficking by ISIS/Daesh, and a passionate campaigner on this issue. CAP and Ruhama also co-sponsored a second, parallel event: '**Sexual exploitation of the most vulnerable women: Ending impunity, promoting consistency!**' which brought six frontline NGOs together from India, South Africa, Germany, Ireland and France to share perspectives and joint recommendations on tackling the realities of prostitution and sexual exploitation.

As always, CSW was a hectic, energising event and a fantastic opportunity to highlight the issues Ruhama is passionate about with an international audience. Given the global nature of prostitution and sex trafficking, CSW gives Ruhama the chance to work collaboratively with other NGOs, especially survivor-led groups, who share abolitionist principles and the analysis of prostitution as a serious violation of women and girls' human rights.

In October Ruhama was honoured to present our model of frontline work as part of an international conference hosted by the **Conseils des Femmes Francophones de Belgiques** in Brussels. The conference focused on the sexual exploitation of women. It explored the gender dimensions of trafficking and the importance of using human rights and victim-centred approaches to combat this phenomenon. The conference engaged a broad range of distinguished speakers representing various European countries. We presented Ruhama's service model and policies, outlining the ways in which we strive to proactively support and engage with women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking through a 'person-centred' approach. We emphasised the fundamental importance

of offering non-directive, non-judgemental and flexible services for women with a variety of experiences of prostitution. This approach supports women who do choose to exit prostitution, whilst critically, an expressed desire to exit the sex industry is never a prerequisite for accessing our services.

Back at home, Ruhama joined Ireland's **Victims' Rights Alliance** in 2016, which works in partnership with other civil society organisations to ensure the full implementation of the EU Victims' Directive in Ireland, and to raise awareness about the rights of victims in the criminal justice system. Our engagement with the Alliance is of relevance to the women we support, many of whom have been victims of crime in the context of prostitution and sex trafficking.

RAISING AWARENESS, SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND BEST PRACTICE

Throughout 2016 Ruhama engaged in a host 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. Dialogue with the media, politicians, public representatives, community groups and students, to name but a few, all served to raise the profile of Ruhama's work to tackle sexual exploitation.

In terms of sharing knowledge and best practice, of particular note in this regard is the free dedicated training we provided to a wide range of professionals throughout 2016. This includes the continuation of training originally developed as part of the **REACH Project**, which 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 2016, 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.

VOLUNTEERING AT RUHAMA

CHAMPIONING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ruhama could not do the work we do without the enormous contribution of our trained volunteer team. Our volunteers are true agents of change and do vital work in empowering the women who access our services, and supporting them to assert their rights. In 2016 **46 volunteers contributed 2,607 hours** to the provision of a variety of essential services including:

- Outreach to women in street prostitution
- Counselling
- Holistic therapies
- Art therapy
- English classes
- Maths classes
- IT classes
- Study support
- Preparation for third level courses
- Career guidance counselling and coaching
- CV and interview skills
- Befriending
- Jewellery making
- Sewing
- Communications and awareness raising

As ever, we relied heavily on the commitment and skill of our volunteers to deliver our services in 2016, and wish to thank everyone who once again generously gave their time, energy and dedication to upholding the rights of women who have been sexually exploited. In their own words, Ruhama volunteers describe what motivates them:





"Meeting the clients. Focusing on their strengths, which they often do not realise they have"

Job coach/CV & Interview skills volunteer

"Women gaining in self-confidence, developing untapped skills and having the opportunity to become more financially independent"

Education volunteer

"Changing mind-sets. Small shifts over time that allow the women to consider new options, have hope and goals for the future"

Outreach volunteer

"The energy of the organisation and the fight for justice for women"

Counselling volunteer

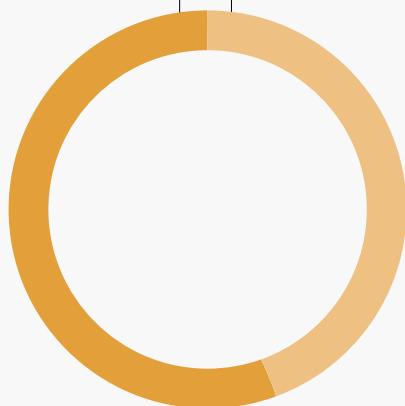
"Empowering women - helping women get back on their feet and enabling them to access opportunities for support and developing themselves"

Outreach volunteer

STATISTICS FOR 2016

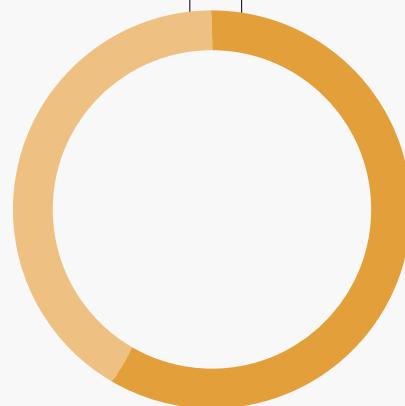
WOMEN IN CASEWORK

Ongoing (123) New (99)



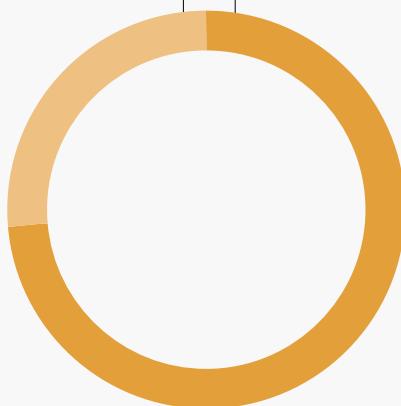
TYPE OF CASEWORK

Trafficking Casework (92 women) General Casework (130 women)



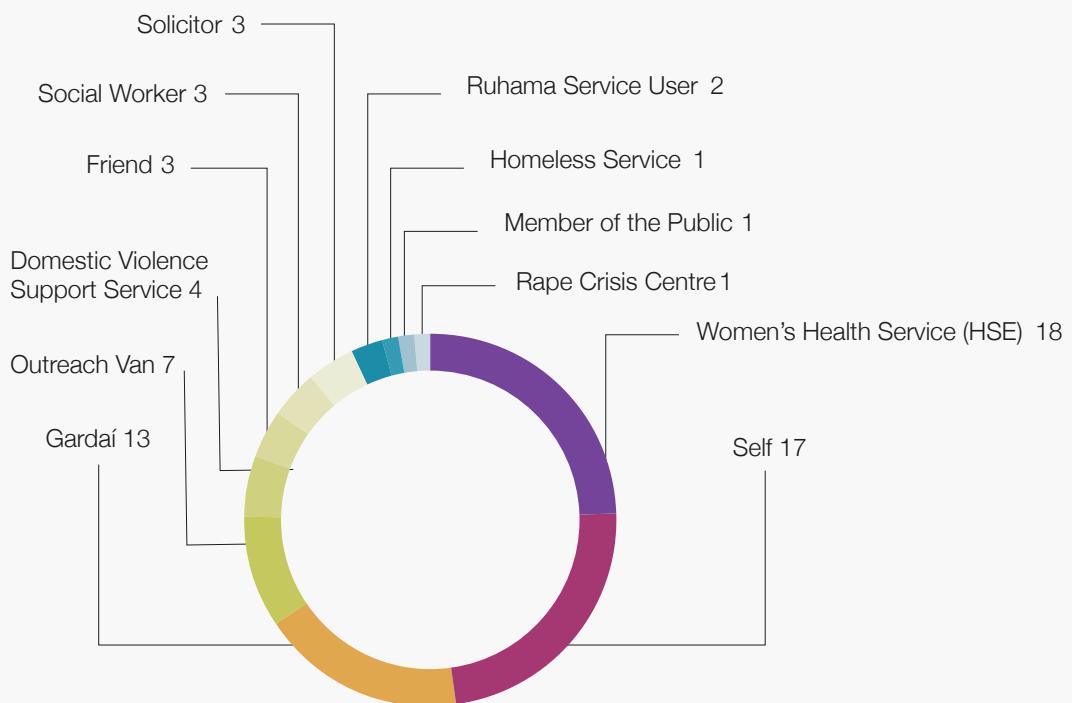
NEW REFERRALS

Trafficking Casework (26) General Casework (73)



WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION: NEW REFERRAL SOURCES

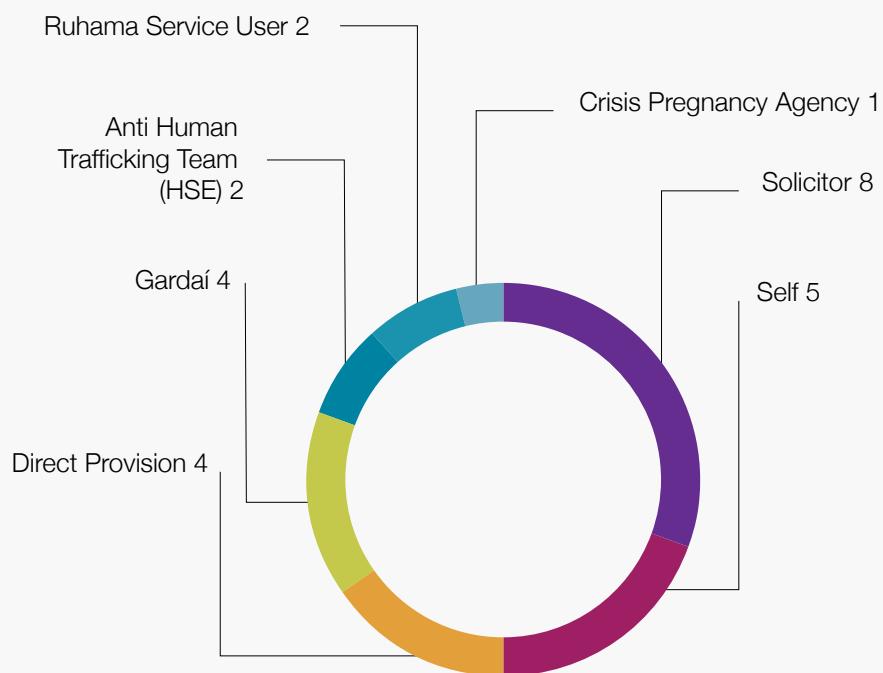
Referral sources for all new cases of women in prostitution in 2016



Women's Health Service 18 | Self 17 | Gardaí 13 | Outreach Van 7 | Domestic Violence Support Service 4 | Friend 3 | Social Worker 3 | Solicitor 3 | Ruhama Service User 2 | Homeless Service 1 | Member of the Public 1 | Rape Crisis Centre 1 =73

VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING: NEW REFERRAL SOURCES

Referral sources for all new cases of victims of trafficking in 2016



Solicitor 8 | Self 5 | Direct Provision 4 | Gardaí 4 | Anti Human Trafficking Team (HSE) 2 |
Ruhama Service User 2 | Crisis Pregnancy Agency 1 = 26

FINANCIAL SUMMARY FOR 2016

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

Income and expenditure 2016		
Annual funding	2016 €	2015 €
Anti Human Trafficking Unit; Department of Justice and Equality	275,000.00	252,000.00
HSE	118,824.00	118,824.00
South Inner City Local Drugs Task Force (HSE)	100,824.00	100,824.00
Other grant income	100,996.00	212,556.00
Donations/fundraising	87,326.00	91,272.00
Total income	682,970.00	775,476.00
Total expenditure	647,616.00	773,264.00
Operating surplus/(deficit)	35,354.00	2,212.00
Other income and expenses		
Interest receivable	41.00	54.00
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	35,395.00	2,266.00

Balance sheet as at 31st December 2016		
Fixed assets	2016 €	2015 €
Tangible assets	17,114.00	26,305.00
Debtors	7,052.00	8,031.00
Cash at bank and in hand	330,632.00	268,318.00
Totals	337,684.00	276,349.00
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	- 144,550.00	- 122,325.00
Net current assets	193,134.00	154,024.00
Total assets less current liabilities	210,248.00	180,329.00
Capital and reserves	16,486.00	21,962.00
Income and expenditure account	193,762.00	158,367.00
Funds	210,248.00	180,329.00

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

We have audited the financial statements of Ruhama for the year ended 31 December 2016, which comprise the Income & Expenditure Account, Balance Sheet, the Statement of Cash Flows, the Statement of Changes in Funds and the related notes and accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is the Companies Act 2014 and accounting standards issued by the Financial Reporting Council and promulgated by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (Generally Accepted Accounting Practice in Ireland), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Ireland'.

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view, of the assets, liabilities and financial position of the company as at 31 December 2016 and of its surplus for the year then ended, and
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with the relevant financial reporting framework and, in particular, the requirements of the Companies Act 2014

Matters on which we are required to report by the Companies Act 2014:

- 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
- The financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records
- In our opinion the information given in the directors' report is consistent with the financial statements

Signed by:

Liam McQuaid

For and on behalf of:

Duignan Carthy O'Neill Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors
84 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4.

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 is '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 €60,000 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 2016 Ruhama had a paid staff team of 11 employees, two of whom were employed full time. Our whole-time equivalent was 8.5. Salary breakdown in 2016 (*based on **full time salary rates** which are pro-rated to each employee's contract hours) was as follows:

Salary per annum:	
between €60,000-70,000	1 person*
between €50,000-60,000	1 person*
between €40,000-50,000	6 persons*
between €30,000-40,000	2 persons*
between €20,000-30,000	1 person*

As a service organisation, our staff team deliver 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 of our staff operate in a frontline capacity. Six staff work exclusively frontline in their focus (56%), two staff engage in both frontline and other work (21%) and just three focus exclusively on administration/finance/ fundraising/ policy and/or communications (23%). 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 40-50 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 flexible, responsive, comprehensive support and outreach services in a holistic, but also extremely cost-effective way.

"Good governance is less about structure and rules than being focused, effective and accountable."

- Pearl Zhu,

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

STATUTORY FUNDING

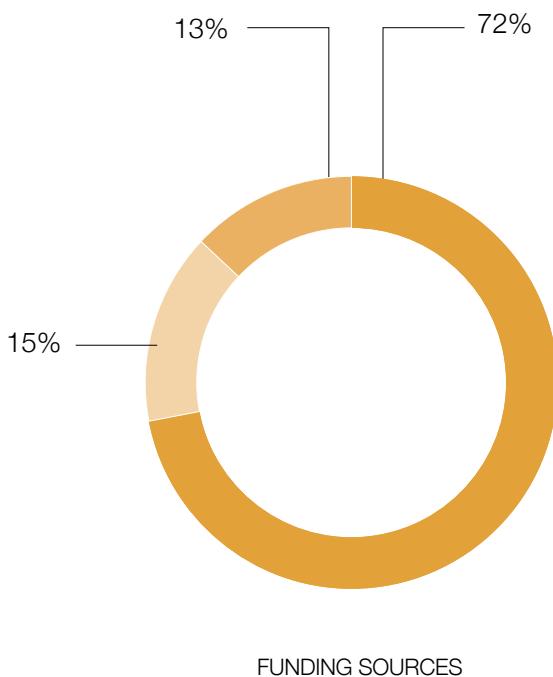
Ruhama received in excess of 50% of its funding from statutory sources in 2016, comprising:

- The Department of Justice & Equality (Anti Human Trafficking Unit)
- The HSE CH06
- The South Inner City Local Drugs Task Force (HSE CH07)
- 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, to those who donate small but essential amounts on a monthly or one-off basis, your support and generosity is essential to us. 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



Ruhama's funding sources 2016

Statutory funding 72% | Other grant income 15% | Donations 13%

100%

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