

**- Trafficking in Persons Report Comes at Key Point in the Fight Against Human Trafficking –
Report serves as a stark reminder that we are still not adequately meeting needs of victims**

Today's publication of the Trafficking in Person's report for 2020 has delivered a number of key recommendations in the fight to eliminate trafficking. Key among these are:

- the need to vigorously investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers
- the need to continue training for law enforcement and legal stakeholders on victims centred, trauma informed approaches
- the need to improve the capacity to identify victims
- the need to provide specialised accommodation for victims of trafficking

Speaking following the report's release today, Ruhama CEO Barbara Condon commented, "the report serves as an important reminder to all stakeholders committed to the elimination of human trafficking that there is more work to be done to adequately address this issue. Many of the recommendations centre on the need to greater facilitate the identification of potential victims of trafficking and to put in place the necessary supports for those victims. While the announcement earlier this year of reforms to the National Referral Mechanism was welcome, these reforms need to be delivered as a matter of urgency and be rooted in the needs of victims. This includes the delivery of gender specific accommodation for victims of sex trafficking which still has not been delivered, despite persistent scrutiny at national and international level of these delays."

The rate of prosecution and conviction of human traffickers under the prevailing legislation has again been a focus of criticism in this report. Access to justice for victims is a crucial pillar in achieving the goal of greater prosecution and conviction of traffickers. Ruhama service users and their brave testimony were a key part of the successful conviction for human trafficking that took place in Mullingar recently. It is absolutely essential that the justice and law enforcement systems are accessible to victims should they wish to engage with them and in this way, training for these stakeholders is essential.

Speaking on this issue, Barbara Condon continued, "the testimony of victims of human trafficking is key to the successful arrest, prosecution and conviction of human traffickers. There are many challenges that a victim can face when contemplating engaging with law enforcement and the justice system. Meeting victims where they are at and adequately supporting them on their journey is the best pathway to overcoming these challenges. The recent convictions in Mullingar and operations undertaken by An Garda Síochána to target trafficking in Roscommon, Longford and Donegal show a targeted effort on behalf of law enforcement to root out human trafficking nationwide. While these efforts are very welcome, it is important that a standard of victim centred, and trauma informed practices remain at the centre of these operations. Ruhama continues to provide training to multiple stakeholders, including members of An Garda Síochána, on best practice for identifying and supporting victims of trafficking."

- ENDS –

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About Ruhama

Ruhama is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) and a registered charity, which works on a nationwide basis with women, including transgender women, impacted by prostitution and sex trafficking. Ruhama offers free and confidential support and assistance to 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.

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