

Happy International Women's Day for 2019



We celebrated International Women's Day in March by saluting our allies, partners, volunteers, friends and of course - the strong, courageous women we support.

Our outreach van, which operates 3-4 nights a week in Dublin, also gave out special gifts bags to women we support who are in street prostitution, marking the occasion.

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Ruhama awarded at the GSK 2018 'IMPACT' Awards in Dublin

We're delighted to have been chosen as one of GSK Ireland's 2018 'IMPACT' charities for the work we do improving women's health and wellbeing nationwide. This is the fourth year of the awards in Ireland, run by global healthcare company GSK. The award consists of €10,000 in funding for Ruhama and a photo and video package to promote the support services we provide to women in Ireland. Our team attended the awards ceremony in January. Thanks to GSK for acknowledging the vital work we do for women affected by prostitution.



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Collaborating to fight sex trade at Madrid Conference



Ruhama attended a brilliant conference in Madrid in January - 'Centering Women and Girls in Ending Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation'. This was hosted by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and Comisión para la Investigación de Malos Tratos a Mujeres. We heard from a wide variety of panelists committed to ending sexual exploitation internationally, including sex-trade survivors, frontline NGOs and researchers.



Our CEO Sarah Benson moderated a panel of youth activists, full of ideas on how best to collaborate to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls. The session also focused on intersecting inequalities that render females vulnerable to such abuse. It was inspiring to be surrounded by activists from all over the world united in a common goal: collaborating to end the harm and abuse of the sex trade and the sexual exploitation of women and girls worldwide.

Ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Ireland

On International Women's Day, we warmly welcomed the ratification by the Irish government of the Istanbul Convention. Ruhama has advocated alongside our allies in the Irish Observatory on Violence Against Women for the government to put legislation in place to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, otherwise known as the 'Istanbul Convention'.

Our CEO, Sarah Benson, was present at the announcement alongside Taoiseach Leo Varadkar. This is a landmark, progressive piece of legislation to combat all forms of violence against women in Ireland.





Ruhama needs YOU!

Support us in this year's VHI Women's Mini Marathon on Sunday 2nd June 2019

Would you like to support women affected by prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland? It's time to #Run4Ruhama!

Contact us (01 836 0292/admin@ruhama.ie) to let us know you are taking part on our behalf so that we can provide you with a sponsorship pack and a FREE t-shirt.

Use hashtag #Run4Ruhama on social!

To register for the event, visit www.vhiwomensminimarathon.ie or pick up an entry form in The Herald newspaper every Wednesday & Saturday.



Revisiting Trauma

Leah's Story

Ruhama offered support to Leah* by way of counselling and trauma healing therapy. This is her story, as told by her Ruhama caseworker.

I left school at the beginning of the nineties and secured a place in college but decided to defer it for a year so I could do some travelling. I rounded off my year with a summer in Ibiza, mostly sleeping during the day and working at night in the clubs. I knew I was coming back to Ireland to start college so I was determined to really enjoy that summer – ecstasy was everywhere.

I found it hard to make enough money doing promotional work so sometimes I would dance at one of the adult clubs to make a little extra. Some of the girls were escorts there. I got involved, thinking it would be just another experience to have before I went back to Ireland and one that could make me good money. I called this 'my summer of madness'.

After that, I came back to Ireland, went back to living at home and started college. The years rolled past, I qualified, got a good job, met my husband and now have two beautiful little girls. That summer was a distant memory. That is, until last year. My husband works for a large multinational and we were at a corporate function. I was happily making chit-chat to people at the event. At the end of the evening we were saying goodbye to people we knew, when a man came up to me and said smiling "I think I know you". He moved his hand to touch me lightly, after moving away. In that moment, I couldn't move or breathe.

In the days afterwards I told myself not to be stupid. I convinced myself that I would never see him again and even if I did, I had done nothing wrong. But I couldn't stop thinking about it. It was all I could think about. I began to look at people on the street and wonder if they knew me and were they looking at me because of it. It consumed me.

Vague memories of that summer and certain things that happened in Ibiza came back to me and it was painful reliving them in my head. I couldn't tell my husband or anyone in my family because they just wouldn't understand. I did a search online to see if someone had similar experiences to me and found Ruhama. I gave them a call. I was able to talk to them and open up – they just 'get it'.

"Vague memories of that summer and certain things that happened came back to me. It was painful reliving them."

Everything was confidential. I met with a counsellor over a period of time and they helped me work through my anxiety and put certain events of the past behind me. I was determined to talk through these events but ultimately move past the pain and take a step forward, not back. My experience with Ruhama was a great one, they were truly helpful in supporting me to move past my trauma.

*Details have been changed to protect confidentiality.



First conviction of sex buyer in Ireland under Sexual Offences Act 2017

In January, Ruhama welcomed the first conviction of a man charged with paying for sex at a Blanchardstown brothel under the Sexual Offences Act 2017. This landmark conviction sent a clear message to Irish society that it is not acceptable to pay for access to another person's body for sexual gratification. We're hopeful that more convictions will be achieved under this legislation in future.

UCD Women Graduate's Association hold bridge night in aid of Ruhama

Big thanks to the UCD Women Graduate's Association who recently held a charity bridge night in aid of Ruhama. The event took place at the Mount Merrion Community Centre in Dublin and was a sell out! A great night full of food, prizes and games was enjoyed by the local community and graduates of UCD. Special thanks to Rita and Carmel from the association for organising.

Thanks to Tour De Force for cycle in aid of Ruhama

Last year, Tour De Force held a cycle in Italy and chose Ruhama as one of their charities to support. We are truly grateful to the team and touched by their hard work. Here's what they said about their experience:

"Tour De Force was delighted to have chosen Ruhama as one of our charities this year. It's wonderful to support work helping women affected by prostitution and other forms of exploitation. During our cycle to Sicily in 2018, we witnessed a number of women involved in street prostitution. Their vulnerability reminded us that the work of our chosen charity helps ensure relevant supports are provided to persons subject to such exploitation."



Women celebrate successes at courses in Ruhama

This Spring, a number of the women we support graduated from our trauma healing wellness course 'Capacitar' and our 'Shaping Your Future' professional development course. Both courses have helped women improve their coping mechanisms, build self-esteem and gain essential skills to access education and the labor market. We're super proud of all the graduates and commend them for their commitment and dedication to completing the courses. We hope they continue to benefit you into your futures.

