



**RUHAMAMA**

Supporting Women Affected by Prostitution

# **2010 Statistics Report**

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## Chief Executive Officer's Introduction

Welcome to Ruhama's 2010 statistical report. Ruhama is the only Non Governmental Organisation working in Ireland exclusively to support women affected by prostitution, including victims of sex trafficking. We are a frontline support service and also play a key role in advocacy and awareness raising about issues relating to prostitution and trafficking.



2010 was a challenging year with the organization sustaining significant statutory funding cuts and the great challenge of fundraising that is impacting on the entire voluntary sector. However the work continues to develop and grow and in 2010 Ruhama worked with a total of **204 women**, an increase on 2009 of 4%. Ruhama had sustained numbers of new victims of trafficking referred into its service and met with an increased number of women involved in street based prostitution.

### A dedicated team

In such a challenging climate Ruhama could not continue to meet the demand for our services and the broad variety of needs that individual women convey without an extremely dedicated staff and volunteer team. Staff work hand in hand with volunteers who work on the outreach van, act as teachers, trainers, befrienders and support our administrative, policy and communications work. I want to take this opportunity to extend my most sincere thanks to them all. Equally the staff team themselves have taken on extensive cost saving initiatives in the spirit of maximizing the resources Ruhama has, to deliver the greatest positive impact possible for the women they work with. The staff team must be commended for this in addition to their consistent passion and skill in their work. I would also like to thank our dedicated Board of Directors for their unwavering support for Ruhama's mission.

### Collaborative working

Collaboration with key stakeholders is also critical to the success of our work. Given the complex needs of women affected by prostitution and in particular victims of sex trafficking we engage regularly alongside other important services. These include health, immigration, legal, addiction, education, family and other social services and statutory bodies including the HSE and Gardai. Of particular note in 2010 was our participation in the Dignity Project, of which more is said later in the report. Also in this year Ruhama joined a new collective campaigning group seeking to end prostitution and sex trafficking in Ireland. This has now become the exciting and diverse Turn Off the Red Light alliance again exemplifying the value of different groups and individuals coming together with a common purpose to create positive social change.

### Who does Ruhama work with?

Ruhama's service is open to women actively involved in prostitution, exiting prostitution, with a past experience of prostitution, vulnerable to entering prostitution and victims of sex trafficking. While the very broad spectrum of supports available from Ruhama to women certainly facilitate women exiting prostitution and pursuing other life goals, neither is it a requirement of our service that women are actively seeking to exit at the time they engage with us. With over two decades experience in this work we recognize the significant complexities involved in the lives of the majority of women in prostitution and respect these, focusing on the issues which are a priority for the women themselves.

Women whom Ruhama works with come from very diverse backgrounds and experiences but also often have a great deal in common. Most are vulnerable migrant women or marginalized Irish nationals, experience economic difficulties especially debt, some have addiction issues. A lack of family supports, early school leaving, limited

educational or other training experience, English language barriers and issues of immigration status and residency entitlement are all very common threads. Additionally experiences of abuse and neglect as young women/girls are very significant. This is the case for both victims of trafficking and women who were not trafficked but became involved in prostitution.

### **The reality of prostitution in Ireland**

On any day up to 1000 women and girls are available for purchase for sex in apartments, hotels, on the streets and in private clubs and massage parlours across the country.<sup>1</sup> However, it is critical to avoid the common trap of categorizing prostitution according to the location or context in which it takes place. A woman or girl being bought for sex on a street corner has to perform the same sex acts as a woman in a high class hotel room. Prostitution is about sex: oral, vaginal, anal sex – whatever the buyer is looking for. This is the reality of prostitution: having to be available to be penetrated by strangers repeatedly on a daily basis. A sex act is mechanically the same wherever it is performed – anything additional such as the availability of a drink or a shower for the buyer is window dressing on what is simply an exploitative exchange where a person with means will buy access to another person's body for their own sexual satisfaction.

### **Who benefits from prostitution?**

Entering prostitution is largely a survival tactic and it can have seriously harmful consequences for those involved. These can include direct physical health impacts but also long term psychological harm that can manifest itself in many ways such as acute anxiety or depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>2</sup> Additionally there is the ever present risk of coercive sex acts, rape, physical assault and emotional abuse that are a fundamental part of the experience of those in prostitution. Prostitution is not about women's empowerment or equality and in fact it undermines both.

The only ones who meaningfully benefit are those organizing, pimping, procuring, trafficking and buying prostitutes. There is always someone who wants to profit of the bodies of those in prostitution and it is a rare event to have anyone truly "independent" in the Irish sex trade. International studies consistently show that 90% of those prostituted want to exit. It is this 90% who should be attended to through recognition by society and the state that prostitution is not a harm free enterprise but one that is inherently dangerous and connected to organized crime. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is intrinsically linked to organized prostitution – they cannot be separated as one will not exist without the other.

In 2010 Ruhama worked with **80** women who were victims of trafficking and **60** women who were otherwise involved in prostitution in our casework. We worked with a further **64** women in street prostitution, exclusively through our outreach service. **In this report we publish a powerful personal testimony by Amy, a woman who was in prostitution as an escort.**

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<sup>1</sup>.Kelleher & Associates 2009. "Globalisation, Sex Trafficking and Prostitution – The Experiences of Migrant Women in Ireland" Immigrant Council of Ireland, Women's Health Project and Ruhama.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond et al. 2002: Raymond, Janice C. et al. (2002). A Comparative Study of Women Trafficked in the Migration Process: Patterns, Profiles and Health Consequences of Sexual Exploitation in Five Countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Venezuela and the United States). Amherst, Massachusetts: Coalition Against the Trafficking in Women.

Farley et al 2003. 'Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries: A Update on Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder', in Melissa Farley (ed). Prostitution, Trafficking and Traumatic Stress. Haworth Press.

### Focus on the sex buyer

The focus has rightly turned in recent times, from the women and girls, and the small number of men and boys who are in prostitution towards those who are profiting. This includes of course the buyers. There are a minority of men in Ireland who buy sex. Most sex buyers are married or in relationships and will have a higher than average number of sex partners compared to non-sex buyers. The attitudes expressed by sex buyers surveyed, towards the women they buy are deeply troubling and indicate a total lack of respect and in some cases serious antagonism for the women involved.<sup>3</sup> The real profile of sex buyers also demonstrates that they do not fit the stereotypical profile of the lonely man who can't otherwise have sex without buying it. This is a multi million euro industry in Ireland fueled by their demand. State and social responses to prostitution need to reflect this and examine the best approach that will support those in prostitution, including victims of trafficking and also hold to account those who feel entitled to purchase another person's body as a commodity. Ruhama appreciates the difficulties that lead to entry for the majority of those in prostitution and the great challenge of exiting once involved. We recognize that they should not be criminalized but offered support to make their own positive choices and to overcome the barriers that they face in life. The buyer however has the power and shapes the sex industry in Ireland through demand. A positive step in overcoming the growth of the trade would be to stem demand by criminalising the buyers through legislative change.

### And not forgetting...

This introduction cannot conclude without acknowledging the extraordinary spirit of the women Ruhama has the privilege to work with. These women are creative, resourceful and amazing survivors in the face of challenges that many would falter in overcoming. It is the words, tears, humour and victories great and small that these women share with us which will ensure that no matter what the future holds, Ruhama will remain a presence and resource for those who need it.

The 2010 Ruhama report highlights the very real continuing issue of prostitution and trafficking in Ireland today. It also demonstrates frontline responses that really work and a service that remains dedicated to responding to the needs of a highly marginalized group despite the challenging financial times we are enduring. While we are grateful for continued statutory support this has been reduced in recent years and Ruhama requires non-statutory funding to meet over 30% of running costs. We are deeply thankful to all of our supporters. Given additional statutory funding cuts in 2011 the need for donations has only increased and we appreciate any funding support that is given which will ensure that we continue to deliver a unique, excellent, much needed service for which there is only a growing demand.

## Sarah Benson

### Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>3</sup> **McLeod et al 2008.** Challenging Men's Demand for Prostitution in Scotland. Glasgow: Women's Support Project.

**EscortSurveys.com 2006:** The Irish Escort Clients survey

**Farley et al 2011.** Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don't Buy Sex: *"You can have a good time with the servitude" vs. "You're supporting a system of degradation"* Paper presented at Psychologists for Social Responsibility Annual Meeting July 15, 2011, Boston, MA. San Francisco: Prostitution Research & Education.

## An Escort's Story

One of the greatest myths about prostitution is that there is somehow a difference between prostitution generally and “escorting”, where it is claimed that men are paying for a woman’s “company and time”. This is dispelled powerfully by the testimony, published in this report, of Amy\* who was an “escort” and who reveals exactly what the experience was like for her. This is her own personal story in her own words; however, the themes echo those of many of the women Ruhama works with and we have chosen to publish her entire testimony as a part of this report with her permission. (\*the only word changed in this first hand testimony is the name to protect confidentiality).

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*“I began escorting officially when I was 20, although technically it began when I was a teenager but I didn't really know that was actually what it was. When I was 16 I had met a man in his thirties that paid me to do things for him and his friends but never said it was prostitution or anything. He had me totally in his control, psychologically, so that I would do anything for him and be extremely worried and anxious about not making him happy. This went on for a few years. When I finally got rid of him, I began escorting on my own.*

*I could say this was a choice, it was, a freely made one. However considering the background of rape and sexual abuse that lasted about three years, looking back, I can see how vulnerable I was and how I was emotionally not stable enough to be making that kind of 'choice'. I thought being a prostitute would help me regain my sexual power over men. I never had any control and I thought this was the answer, and a way to 'get back' at the man who raped me and the other man who manipulated me into being his plaything, basically. Also because of these experiences I had put all of myself worth into my sexuality and how I looked and judged myself on how much I attracted men.*

*Without this experience there is absolutely no way that I would've become involved in the sex industry.*

*When I started escorting on my own, it felt okay at the beginning; I liked the feeling of being in 'control' of the men, and 'using' them for their money, but I soon started realising that my plan to be in control had backfired, that actually the men were in control and had the power, and they weren't afraid to show me that they were the ones in charge. I felt disgusting after most times I met with a punter. They pressured me into doing things I didn't want to do by promising me more money. They used language that both made me want to please them and disgusted me at the same time.*

*You could say that I could've stopped at any moment. That is true, but I didn't have the emotional tools to be able to stop. My past had the biggest hold on me and I hadn't even started processing it. At that stage I still didn't think of it as abusive behaviour.*

*For me, I needed the attention of men to make me feel more 'okay', I needed to feel wanted in that kind of way, I needed the constant (but short lived) ego boost that it gave me. I was in a vicious circle of having a rock bottom self esteem and hating what I was doing, but needing the attention at the same time to make me feel better. I had an extremely skewed view of myself. I attempted suicide twice.*

*I got sucked into the online world of escorting and felt like what I was doing was normal. This went on, and off, for about four years or so.*

*I was pretty shy, but pretending to be super confident and I think the punters could see through that most of the time. Now, looking back, the scariest thing is the punters and how they treated me and talked to me. I am disgusted to think back to the 40 something year old men would happy pressure me into doing things, knowing that I was only 21, knowing in their hearts that it isn't normal or healthy to buy sex.*

*I was pretty naive and the guys all just think that you've been doing it for ages and you're 'used to it'. They have no idea how dangerous and scary the escorting world is, they are all deluded by the few 'happy hookers' that talk on the websites all the time, they think these girls are the only type of girls that exist.*

*That men will write 'reviews' of their time having sex with a girl is the most disturbing part of the whole thing, apart from the fact that they are punters in the first place of course. That it is apparently normal on the website to tick girls off in relation to the way they have sex is insane. The men write things like 'she was a bit mechanical', and 'she wanted me in and out as fast as possible' and they give her a bad review because she wasn't 'into it'. Did they ever stop to ask themselves why she wasn't into it? That maybe she didn't want to be there? Instead of asking the girl if she is okay and why isn't she happy, they run home to their precious internet to tell all the other punters about the terribly trauma of visiting a prostitute who hates her job. It's so sad. It's just a bunch of pathetic men showing off to each other online. If you tell a lie that others want to believe then they're going to use that and delude themselves and each other. This is what all punters and the escorts that use the websites do. Everyone is lying to each other and it's easier to believe the lies than question what they are doing. When you tell punters about the reality, they get suddenly very defensive and don't want to talk to you anymore.*

*Finally I had a punter that verged on behaving in an illegal way and it was the reality check I needed to stop properly. It was the worst I've ever been treated, but I'm glad it happened, because there were no lies I could tell myself about that encounter, there was no way to justify it, so I had to admit honestly to myself that the reality of the situation. To this man I wasn't even a human. I wasn't just 'unlucky', being treated like that was a daily threat and most of the punters treated me in a similar way.*

*On the website I used to advertise on, the punters were often giving out about 'Ruhama', I had never heard of it before. I went on the Ruhama website and sent an email, within hours I got a phone call back and a couple of days later a phone call from a case worker to arrange to meet. I felt such relief to meet with her and talk to someone that truly understood my experience that I was nearly crying the entire time.*

*Now I'm avoiding any relationships with men, it's been a year and a half since I stopped but I'm not emotionally able to have any kind of a relationship. I don't trust men. I worry that all new men I meet have visited prostitutes, or are okay with the idea of prostitution. I have great male friends, and I'm so thankful for having them, but when it comes to sexual relationships, I still use sex to get what I want (ie, love) and I still am not secure enough at all to be on equal terms with a man. I'll always think there's a catch to his affection.*

*I read somewhere that two thirds of prostitutes have pasts of abuse, emotional abuse, incest or rape. How could an industry that mostly attracts that kind of damaged person be socially acceptable?*

*Women and men will never be equal as long as prostitution exists, it shouldn't be acceptable to buy women for sex, not if we care about each other, and not if we care about what we want our society to be like."*

# Statistics

## Overview of Statistics

Ruhama supported a total of **204 women** in **2010**, this is an increase of 4% since 2009.

**140** women supported in **Casework** and **70** in **Street Outreach**. (6 women were supported in both casework and outreach).

	Street Outreach Service	Casework	Less the number of women in both Street Outreach and Case Work	Total Number of individual women in 2010
<b>No. Women</b>	70	140	<b>6</b>	<b>204</b>

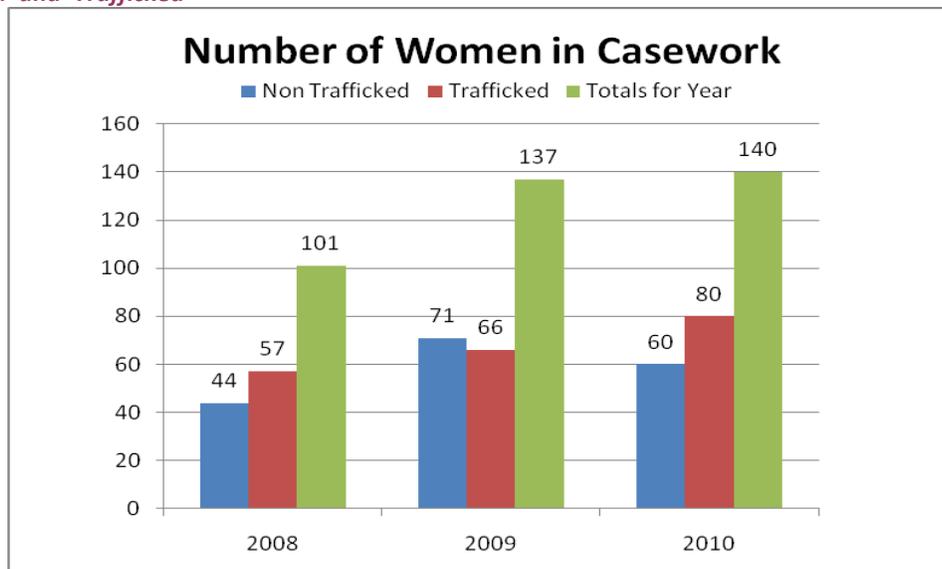
## Casework

When a woman engages in Ruhama’s casework service she will be assigned a caseworker who will work with her to develop a person-centred care plan. Casework involves working on a broad range of issues including: accommodation, health, prostitution, addiction, immigration, negotiating the criminal justice system, family issues, budgeting, education, training & employment.

*“One-to-one support workers are just wonderful. I learned to trust and tell a little at a time of what happened to me. I was terrified at the beginning to say anything as I have learned never to trust anyone or ask anyone for help.” Caroline\**

Ruhama supported **140 women** (60 Non-Trafficked & 80 Trafficked) in casework during 2010. This is an increase of 28% since 2008 and 2% increase since 2009

*Chart (i) shows the yearly total number of women in Casework since 2008. The women are categorized by status ‘Non-Trafficked’ and ‘Trafficked’*



### Witness Support Work for Criminal trials

The trials of Carroll, Clarke, Carroll and Selaru took place in 2010 and 7 women who were victims of human trafficking and supported in Ruhama’s casework, were witnesses for these trials. The witness support work offered by caseworkers during the trials was the culmination of support given to these women over the previous years as they participated in the criminal justice system. The 2 trials resulted in the convictions of 4 people for prostitution related offenses.

*“I have been part of getting a little bit of justice in the world...they cannot abuse other girls. Even though I am scared and I know these men are out there I will never be weak or controlled by anyone again. They are dangerous people and I have been through very bad things but I won’t give up.”*  
Lucy\*

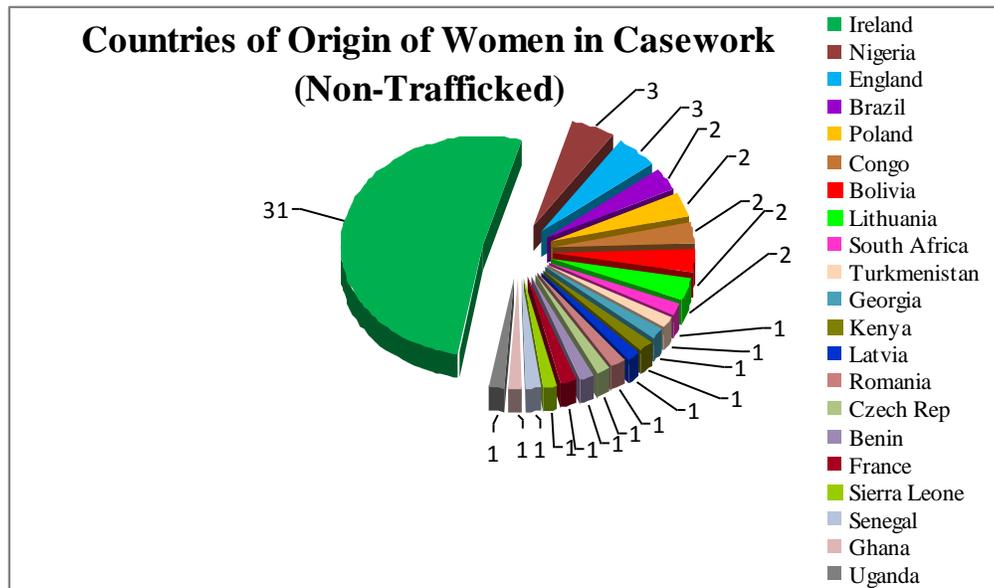
## Countries of Origin

The 140 women supported in casework during 2010 came from **31 different countries**.

This truly exemplifies the global nature of prostitution and trafficking and reflects the complexity of a frontline response such as that offered by Ruhama. We are constantly adapting to ensure that we are mindful and respectful of the diverse cultural backgrounds of the women accessing our services.

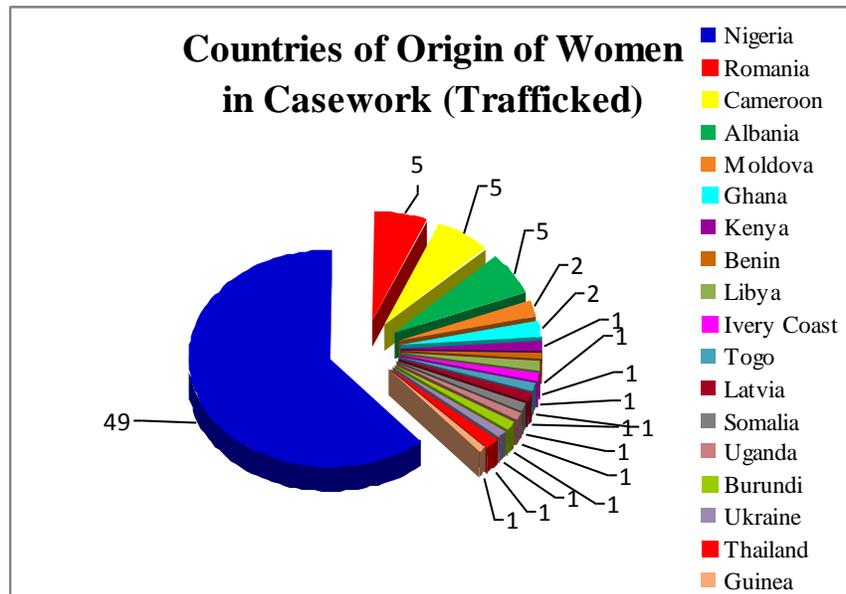
*“We are all different and a mix of nationalities but we have been through so many similar experiences. We know our circumstances were different but none of us chose that life.”* Emma\*

Chart (ii) Countries of Origin - Casework Non-trafficked



The 60 women in casework Non-Trafficked came from **21 different countries**. The majority came from **Ireland (52%)**, with Nigeria, England, Brazil, Poland, Congo, Bolivia and Lithuania following as the next largest cohort.

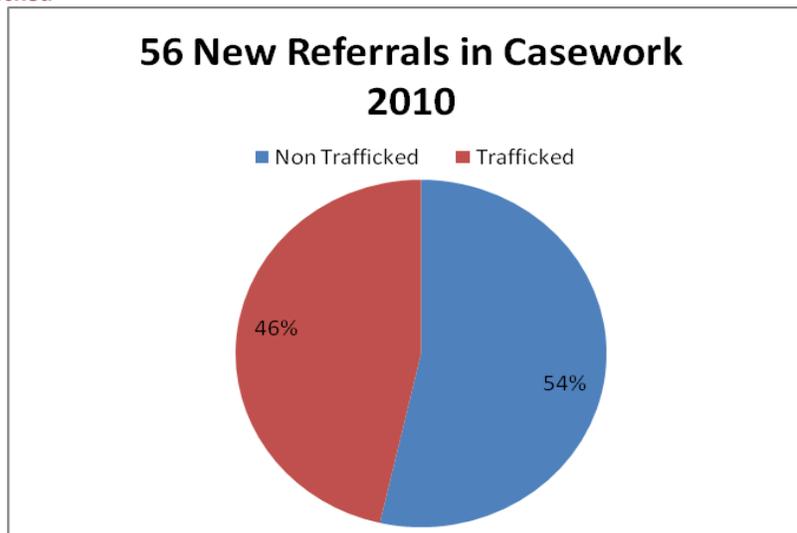
**Chart (iii) Countries of Origin - Casework Trafficked**



The 80 women who were supported in casework (**Trafficked**) in 2010, came from **18 different countries**. The majority came from **Nigeria (61%)**, with Romania, Cameroon, Albania, Moldova and Ghana the next significant cohort. Other women came from countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

## New Referrals to Casework in 2010

**Chart (iv) Shows the number of New Referrals to Casework in 2010. The women are categorized by status 'Non-Trafficked' and 'Trafficked'**

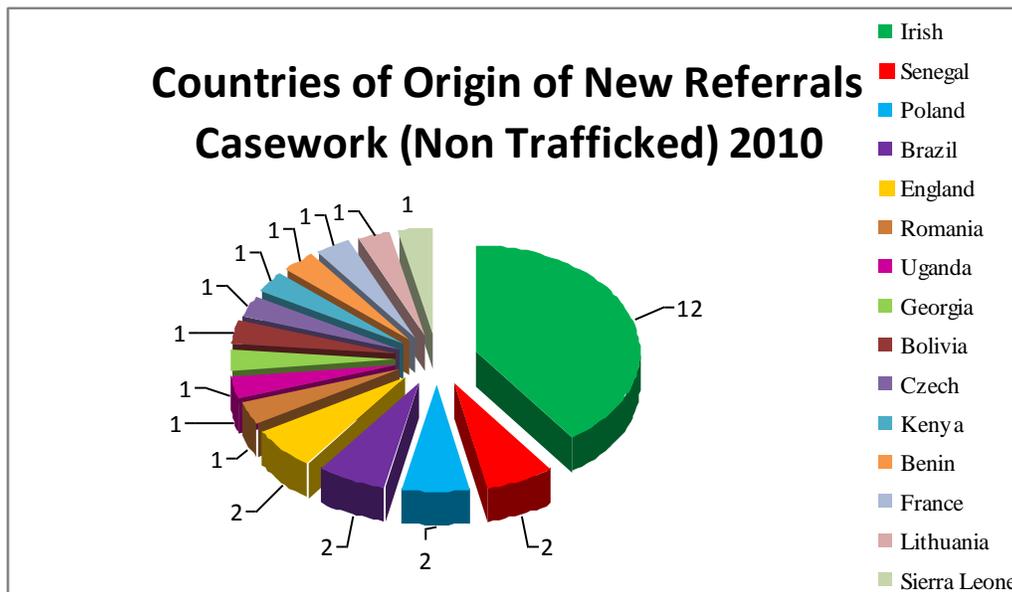


In 2010 Ruhama received a total of **56 New Referrals** of women to the case work section

- **30** women were supported in casework (**non-trafficked**)
- **26** women were supported in casework (**trafficked**)

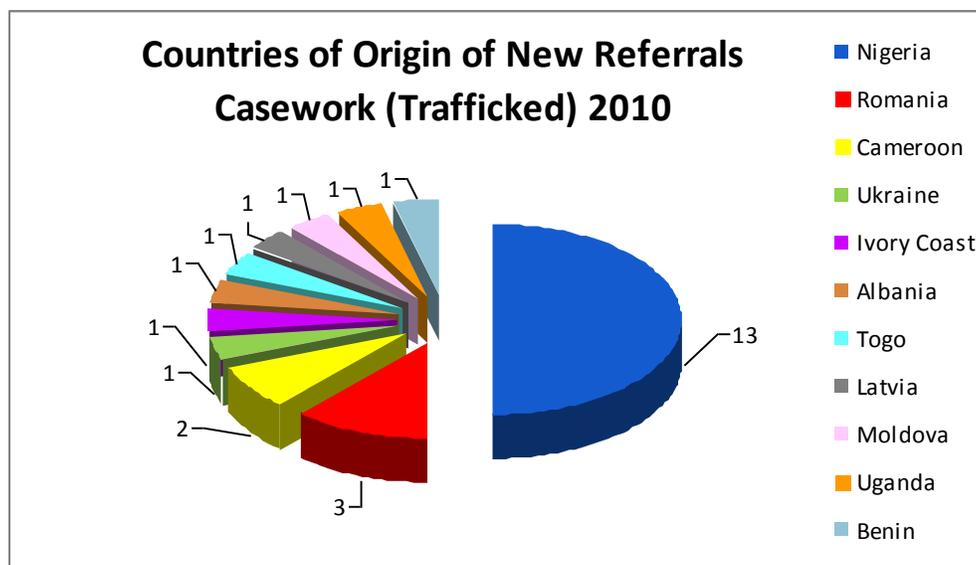
The majority of new referrals were women involved in off-street prostitution, specifically women involved in escort agencies or brothels.

**Chart (v) Countries of Origin - New referrals Casework Non-trafficked**



The 30 **NEW** referrals to casework **Non-Trafficked** were from **15 different countries**. The largest number came from **Ireland (40%)**, with Senegal, Poland, Brazil and England the next largest group.

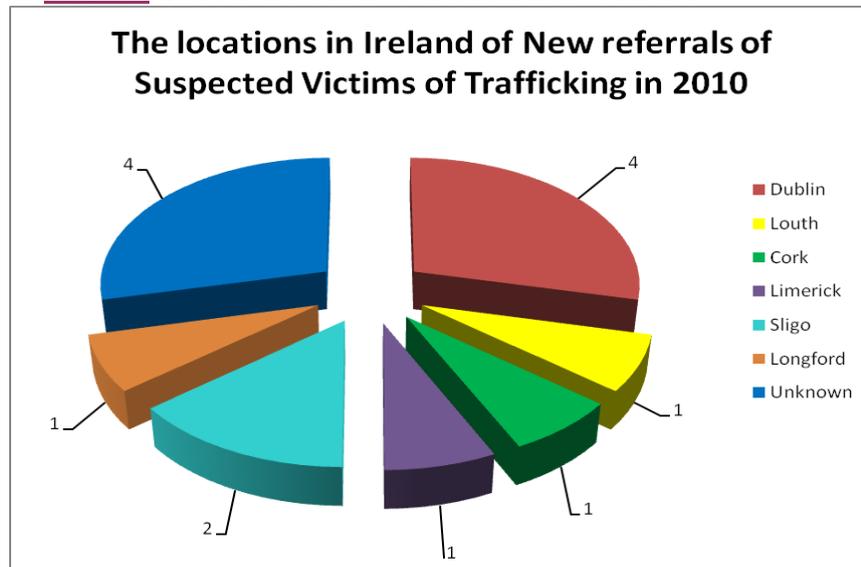
**Chart (vi) Countries of Origin - New Referrals Casework Trafficked**



The 26 **NEW** referrals to casework **Trafficking** came from **11 different countries**, the largest number came from **Nigeria (50%)** and **Romania (12%)**. Others came from a range of countries in Africa, Eastern Europe or Africa.

## The locations of women (New referrals in casework) who were trafficked into and within Ireland

Chart (vii) Locations in Ireland where New referrals to casework were trafficked



We received 26 New referrals of suspected victims of trafficking in 2010, **14 of these new referrals were trafficked into and within Ireland**. The others were trafficked into other countries in Europe and escaped to Ireland.

The 14 women who were trafficked into Ireland were located in different regions and trafficked to multiple locations (ie Sligo, Navan, Dublin)

**Technology and the sex trade:** The reality today is that organizers of prostitution, including of course traffickers rely increasingly on mobile phone and internet technology to advertise prostitution in Ireland. This means that prostitution is no longer restricted to large urban areas but is a presence now in even the smallest rural communities. It is happening in small communities in apartments, over shops and pubs – hidden in plain sight. Women are moved quickly and sometimes frequently and the criminals involved remain at arms length hiding behind a computer screen. The degree of control over women is not reduced however, simply more high tech with information on their movements, numbers of buyers, the amount of cash changing hands immediately available to pimps and traffickers even if they are not on site with women.

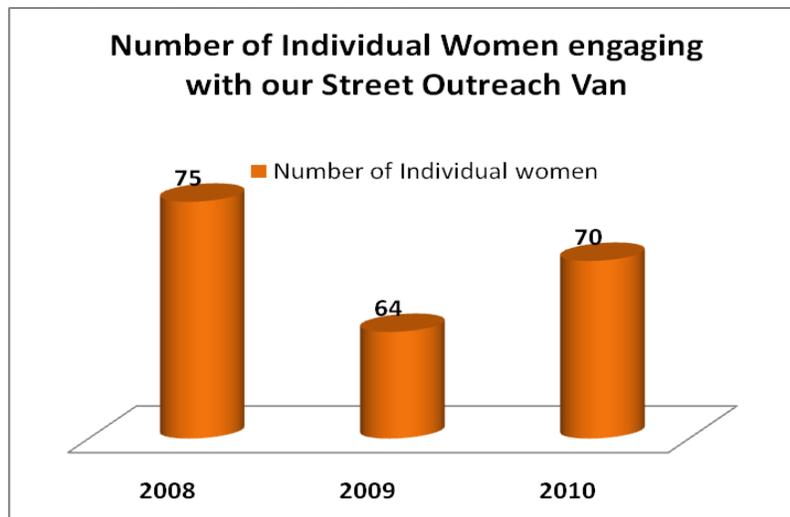
**Ruhama advocates legislative reforms to catch up with the advances of organized prostitution, of which trafficking is a key component, that will better facilitate Gardai in policing an industry that is now ruled by mobile phone and internet sites.**

*“There are no real friends allowed in the business...you are forced into being in apartments with other women and pimps always tell you not to trust her... they turn women against each other...and you are moved around all the time so there is no time to develop friendships.” Ana*

## Street Outreach

Ruhama's Outreach team proactively makes contact with women involved in street prostitution in Dublin through our outreach van, which is adapted with seating and creates a safe woman-only space for women to engage with our service, have a break and speak with workers about issues of relevance to them. Women can avail of information on services and supports that can assist them. In some cases, women engage in a follow up to Ruhama's casework for ongoing support.

**Chart (viii) No. of women met in Street Outreach**



There was an increase of 9% of women engaging with Ruhama's Street Outreach Van in 2010. The majority of women are Irish and many are drug users. We have also encountered a number of women who have returned to prostitution after many years due to financial pressures.

## Development, Education & Resettlement

A key component of the service Ruhama offers is Development, Education and Resettlement. This service has evolved over time in response to the demands of the service users themselves. The objective is to support women in identifying and achieving career goals and independent living through a creative combination of responses tailored to each individual.

In 2010 **58 women** participated in a range of programmes in the Development & Resettlement section of Ruhama in 2010. Ruhama's Development and Education service offers:

- Professional Career path planning Service
- Free in house one to one and/or group education and training including study support
- Support accessing external training and development opportunities (e.g. through assistance sourcing courses, financial support with travel costs, course fees and/or childcare fees)
- Support in accessing work placement and/or employment
- Access to holistic therapies
- Access to individual caseworker should the need for any additional supports arise
- Assistance in accommodation resettlement (see section below)

### **In-house programmes offered by Ruhama in 2010**

In-house Development included: Group and one to one classes in English, Math, Literacy, Computers. There were also group sessions provided in the STEPs programme, Assertiveness training, sexual health education, Art, Crafts, Machine sewing, Creative writing, First Aid, Yoga and Alexander techniques. A number of women were also supported to access external training opportunities within their local community and in educational institutions.

“When I came here I could not believe that someone could give you so much encouragement...I thought is it a dream? They said it was not my fault what happened...they said not to think you are nothing...you can be somebody.”  
Orla\*

### **Barriers for women accessing education and development opportunities**

The women Ruhama works with demonstrate a remarkable thirst for learning and achieving positive outcomes for education and employment. That said, there are a wide range of barriers to their participation in education and training. The most significant barriers identified by women themselves include poverty/low income, legal status, health or trauma, anxiety or depression, lack of childcare, lack of education, and in some cases a fear of traffickers.

Ruhama responds pro-actively by providing advocacy, access to education grants, support with childcare and ongoing emotional support to assist women through difficult times and help them to maintain their positive future goals. However there are some barriers that are broader and require a statutory response.

### **Legal status**

Many women are in the Irish asylum process, whether or not they are potential victims of trafficking. Ruhama has witnessed how the concerns over status and asylum applications (i.e. their route to long-term, stable residency) can dominate women’s focus and ability to engage in education/coursework. The failure/delay in acquisition of status is often seen as an insurmountable barrier for a woman wishing to progress her education until such time as it is granted.

“I want to study Eldercare. I passed the tests to get in and got a place but it depends on getting my Stamp. I am strong physically and I know I could do this work. Elderly people are so respected in African culture. I love to learn and for me education is so important.... the sky’s the limit.... I would like to do a master’s some day.” Marianne\*

### **Direct Provision**

A large number of women who engage with Ruhama are accommodated in the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) Direct Provision. The hostel system provides little in the way of privacy and space for personal study. The lack of privacy is of particular concern when one considers the fact that these are women who have suffered multiple forms of sexual abuse. Ruhama remains very concerned that women in Direct Provision are still accessible to traffickers/pimps and are also being subjected to sexual harassment by men in and around the hostels. Furthermore, the present dispersal system can cause great anxiety and disruption by relocating women from Dublin to hostels across the country.

### **Positive outcomes for women supported with Education & Development in 2010**

The following gives a sample of courses and progression routes accessed by women who variously:

- Enrolled in Dublin Adult Learning Centre (DLAC). Completed basic education, ESOL and Communications at FETAC level 3 and 4 and computers FETAC level 3.
- Progressed to study in Ballsbridge College of Further Education (BCFE) EFL/ Communications FETAC level 5 in order to bring written and spoken English up to standard essential for University. Applied to CAO for Midwifery.
- Successfully completed year one of a 3<sup>rd</sup> level degree in Social Studies
- Completed a university access course and was successful in applying for a 3<sup>rd</sup> level degree.
- Enrolled in CDVC Preparation for College Course FETAC level 4. Applied for university access course level 5. Long term plan is Social Studies FETAC level 8.
- Applied to do Peter Mark Training and FAS hairdressing course.

- Enrolled in One Family Step to Success course. Gained training experience in Marks and Spencer's followed by part time work.
- After support in CV preparation and presentation skills, gained employment in a retail store.
- Enrolled in Childcare course in Whitehall College of Further Education.
- Enrolled in BCFE in Media and Journalism. Long-term is to apply to university to do Media and Journalism.
- Enrolled on CDVEC LMA Pre college preparation course and Computers in CDVEC at FETAC level 3.
- Applied to Inchicore College of Further Education (ICFE) to do Healthcare Support Pre-paramedics.
- 9 women completed PLC courses in areas including Business Studies, Social Care, Care for the Elderly and Nursing.
- A number of women continue to prioritise basic learning such as Literacy, ESOL CDVEC as necessary to move on in education.
- The self esteem and confidence of women is greatly improved.

### ***Dignity/Ruhama/FAS pre training programme.***

*A particular feature in 2010 was a programme Ruhama was contracted to run as a part of the Dignity Project. The Dignity Project was an EU funded initiative which worked to develop a model of interagency work to deliver quality services to victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Ireland. The Dublin Employment Pact (DEP), in partnership with the Immigrant Council of Ireland (ICI) were joint promoters of the project. Those participating included both statutory and voluntary agencies involved in providing responses and supports to victims of trafficking. It also included partners from Scotland, Spain and Lithuania. A summary and full final report of the Dignity initiative is available on [www.dublinpact.ie/dignity](http://www.dublinpact.ie/dignity).*

*The Dignity project contracted Ruhama to develop and deliver a 12 month pre-training support programme in 2010 to victims of trafficking and women exploited in prostitution. This programme was financially supported by the FAS Social Inclusion Unit. In recognition of the trauma experienced by this vulnerable target group a specialised model was developed to provide wrap around supports and pre-training inputs in order to prepare participants to be ready to access mainstream and community services in training, education and employment preparation following the programme. This project built on the existing model of work with women that Ruhama has been implementing for over a decade.*

*Twenty eight (28) women were registered for the programme. The pre-training supports programme began from where 'each individual woman is at', so that the programme developed for her was led by her unique situation and her need for high, medium or low support.*

*The programme was a huge success with significant positive outcomes achieved for the majority of participants Progression to further education has been remarkable indicating the impact of the year long programme on participant confidence and increased ability. The combination of the Development Team and individual work with an education guidance tutor/career path planner has resulted in a majority of women being already enrolled and in some cases completing courses.*

*A full independent evaluation of the project (contained in the Dignity Final Report) identified significant learning and trends in addition to a ringing endorsement of Ruhama's model of work as an example of excellent practice in addressing the social exclusion of this highly marginalized group.*

*The success of the programme was achieved in spite of significant barriers that are consistent with the experience of the broader group of women accessing support in Development from Ruhama, some of which are noted in this report.*

*A specific closing session was held with an Employment Projects & Enterprise Development Officer with Northside Partnership and a representative from the local FAS centre. Information was provided on FAS, LES and registration at their local centres and a graduation Ceremony was held on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2010 in All Hallows College.*

*Ruhama continues to use and build on this excellent model of work, and incorporate the recommendations of the evaluation to maximize the social inclusion of women in all of our Development work - within the resources available to us.*

***Ruhama would like to take this opportunity to thank the Advisory Committee to the project which included the Dignity Project Co-Ordinator, and representatives from FAS Innovation Funds/ Social Inclusion Unit, Dublin Employment Pact, the***

*Department of Social and Family Protection Affairs, and the HSE. Sincere thanks also go to the independent evaluators of the project Monica O'Connor & Jane Pillinger.*

## Resettlement

**In 2010 twenty (20) women availed of support from the Resettlement programme in Ruhama.** This service was established by Ruhama in response to a need identified by women to support them in accessing independent accommodation. The service is accessed by Irish women, migrant women availing of the administrative arrangements as victims of trafficking or women who have come through the asylum process with the status of leave to remain in the state (stamp 4).

For many migrant women the transition to private rented accommodation, if status is granted, also creates financial difficulties as they have been living on a direct provision allowance of €19.10 per week up to this point and have been unable to save or manage a budget.

Although there is great relief for women when legal status is granted and/or they are in a position to leave RIA accommodation, the transition is also very stressful. Having been in a dependent situation unable to cook or manage one's own daily life often for many years women are suddenly faced with the daunting financial and practical reality of finding accommodation negotiating with multiple welfare and health systems and fitting into a community.

*"It is so confusing to try and fill out forms and know what to do, looking for a place to live, letters for the landlord, bills, I would not have known where to start, she went with me to different places and sorted it all." Rachel\**

### **Ruhama's resettlement programme provides the following:**

- Information about accommodation options including social and sheltered housing or private rented accommodation
- Viewing properties with women and ongoing contact/advocacy with landlords
- Registration with city/county councils
- Accompaniment to Community Welfare Officers regarding entitlements and deposits
- Advice on Lone Parent/Job Seekers Allowance and other social assistance/benefits.
- Advice on utility bills, banking, GPs and medical cards
- Shopping for basic items such as bedclothes
- Budgeting advice
- Support with registration in local schools
- Follow up visits

### **Conclusion**

This report highlights the unique, practical and creative approach Ruhama takes towards achieving its goal of supporting women affected by prostitution by respecting the individual needs and dignity of each woman. While 2010 was a busy year for Ruhama 2011 is already proving to be even busier. As a support agency we strive to adapt to do more with less but it is critical that we are resourced to continue to meet the increasing demands on our services. This report also demonstrates that the sex trade in Ireland is still very much thriving and the harm perpetrated on those prostituted continues. Ireland is a part of an international multi billion euro trade in women and girls and it is timely that the State and indeed that we all as a community reflect and take stock of this reality.

**\*Names changed to protect confidentiality, Quotes taken from the independent evaluation of the Dignity/Ruhama/FAS programme: group and individual interviews with participants.**