



RUHAMA

Supporting Women Affected by Prostitution

Annual Statistics 2009

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1. Introduction by Sarah Benson, CEO, Ruhama

In 2009, Ruhama had another busy year. We worked with 196 women affected by prostitution

This represents an increase of 22% on the figures for 2008 (161 women).

The 196 women includes; women who are currently involved in street-based and off-street prostitution, women with a history of prostitution and women who were victims of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.



The figures in our report refer to the women Ruhama has worked with in 2009 through both our outreach initiative and our more intensive casework service. 59 women were supported exclusively through our outreach, and a further 137 engaged with our caseworkers.

A significant proportion of the women Ruhama worked with through casework in 2009 are victims of sex trafficking (48%) and their experience is one of literal enslavement and sexual exploitation by individuals who profit from the misery of women and children (in two cases the women were children at the time of being trafficked).

However, Ruhama has been working with women who have found themselves involved in prostitution through many different avenues for over 20 years and the reality is that the experiences and impacts of prostitution on all of the women, trafficked or not, are exceptionally similar and only serve to highlight the reality that, for any individual prostituted the experience is fundamentally harmful.

Women in 2009 reported horrific levels of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. The reporting of rape and sexual assault was almost universal, many women also experienced sexual abuse as children and young women; some were groomed by family members and partners into prostitution. Women reported having been punched in the face, the stomach, being kicked down stairs, beaten for refusing to have sex with men, being locked in and refused food, being burned, being bitten. Women were told by buyers that they were “ugly”, “not very good”, that they “should at least try to look like you’re enjoying it” while their bodies are used in whatever way the buyer wishes.

The impacts of such experiences are hugely damaging to women. Women report feelings of deep shame, feeling “soiled”, “like damaged goods”, “like nobody”, “worthless”. Women speak of living in constant states of tension and fear as they could never know what the next buyer might want or do. Some trafficked women have been subjected to threats using juju/witchcraft ceremonies involving being placed in graves and forced to

drink blood. Some women can literally not speak about their experiences when they first come to Ruhama.

Of deep concern to us at present is the reality that Ruhama's funding has come under serious pressure through significant cuts, up to 20%, from our statutory funders in 2010 and the increasing challenge of fundraising in the current climate as we strive to continue to meet the needs of a highly vulnerable, socially marginalized group. Given the scale of abuse experienced by women affected by prostitution and the degree of trauma and harm sustained, the work Ruhama does with women can be slow as trust, healing, self-esteem, well being and positive hope for the future are gradually fostered.

We know that what we do works. Through a combination of one to one support, advocacy, counselling, support accessing health and housing services and also education and training opportunities, women have themselves become empowered to realize alternatives to their life in prostitution and make choices that suit their own needs.

Ruhama has a highly dedicated team of staff and volunteers without whom we could not achieve the "wrap around" supports that are made available to women accessing our services based on their individual needs and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their excellent work.

I hope that this report will not only elicit broader discussion on the harm of prostitution to women and children in Ireland today, but also encourage people to support Ruhama as the only voluntary organization dedicated exclusively to supporting women affected by prostitution in Ireland today.

Sarah Benson

CEO
Ruhama

2. Overview of statistics

	Street Outreach Service	Casework with women affected by prostitution (non-trafficked)	Casework with Victims of Trafficking	Number of women in both Street Outreach and Case Work	Total Number of individual women in 2009
No. Women in Ruhama's service	64 (-5 = 59)	71	66	5	196

3. Street Outreach

Ruhama's Street Outreach service proactively reaches out to women involved in street based prostitution. The outreach van, which goes into the red-light districts at night time, is purposely converted to allow women sit in and avail of a hot drink while meeting with our outreach workers.

The nature of street based prostitution means that many women are involved in prostitution all night and sleep during the day, therefore they may have little or no contact with any service providers. Our outreach service is vital in interjecting into their isolation and often hopelessness. We listen to the women's needs, inform them of services available in Ruhama or other agencies. One crucial component of the outreach service is the capacity to build trusting relationships with the women. This frontline point of contact can give women greater confidence in accessing further assistance from Ruhama.

Due to the transient nature of the encounters with women in street outreach, our data collection system differs from that of casework and does not contain the same level of specific details about women.

In 2009 our Street Outreach service met 64 individual women, 5 of these women sought further assistance and are included in our casework figures.

4. Casework

Casework involves the provision of individually tailored supports to women affected by prostitution. Each woman is assigned a caseworker and a care plan is developed for the woman. Where appropriate, we refer women to other agencies for necessary further support.

Women supported by casework are made up largely of lone parents, former drug users, ex-offenders, early school leavers, vulnerable migrant women and women who have been trafficked to Ireland for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Some of the supports provided include: referral to health or addiction services, advocacy, emotional and psychological support, court accompaniment, access to and support through the asylum process, interpretative support, liaison with other agencies around repatriation and legal advice. Women may also be referred to the Development section of Ruhama. (See section 5).

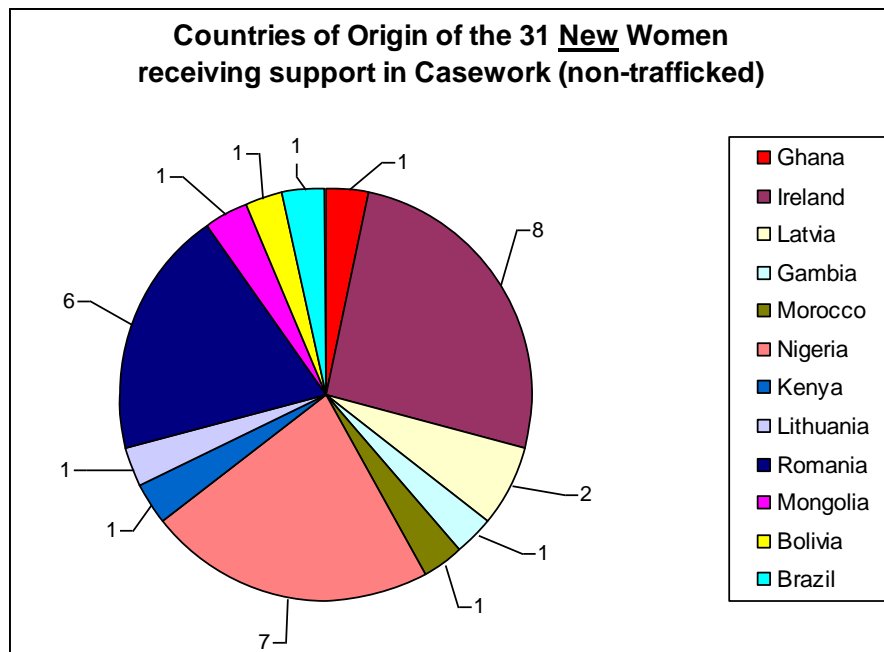
4.1 Casework with Women affected by prostitution (non-trafficked)

In 2009, Ruhama supported **71 women** in our case work (non-trafficked) section.

- **31** of these women were **new** cases.
- The 31 new women came from **12 different countries**.

The broad collection of countries of origin demonstrates the increased number of migrant women involved in the Irish sex trade. The largest number of women were from Ireland (27%), followed by Nigeria (24%) and Romania (19%).

Graph 4.1: Countries of origin of the 31 new women met in casework (non-trafficked)



4.2 Work with Women who are Victims of Trafficking

In 2009, we supported **66 women** who were identified as suspected victims of trafficking.

We provide not just crisis intervention but long term support and aftercare to women who are victims of trafficking. This is reflected in the fact that 40 (61%) of the 66 women supported in 2009 had their first contact with Ruhama prior to 2009.

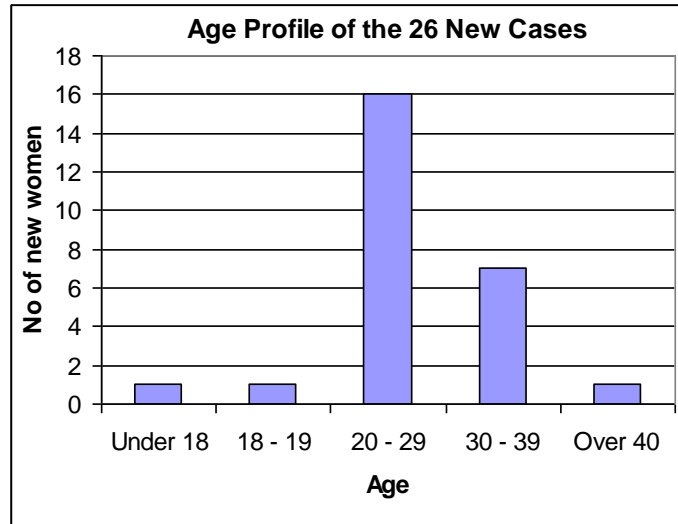
4.1: New Cases

We worked with **26 (39%) new women** who were victims of trafficking in 2009

4.2: Age Profile of the 26 new cases

The majority of women who are new victims of trafficking in 2009 are between 20 – 30. One new case was a minor and another case, while an adult woman when we met her in 2009, was a minor when first trafficked.

Graph 4.2: Age Profile of the 26 new cases of victims of trafficking

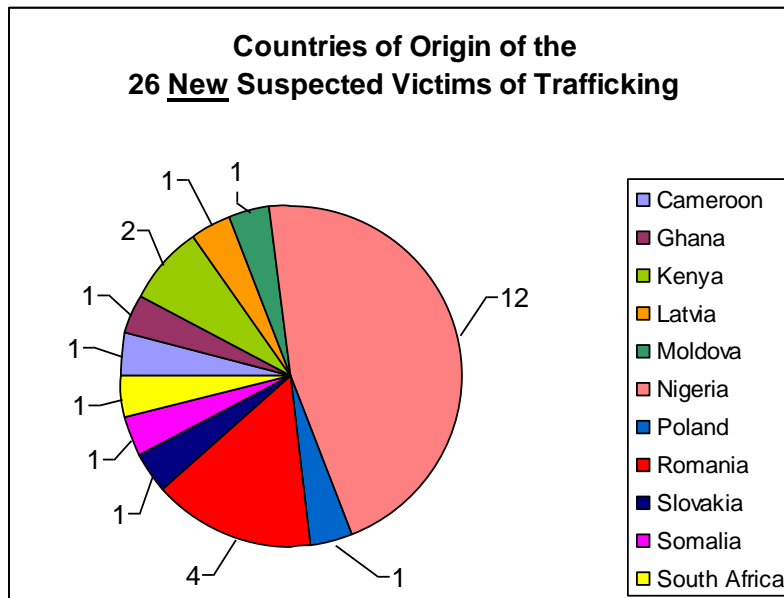


4.3: The countries of origin of the 26 new cases

Women were from **11 different countries**.

The largest number of new cases were women from Nigeria (45%), followed by Romania (15%) and Kenya (8%)

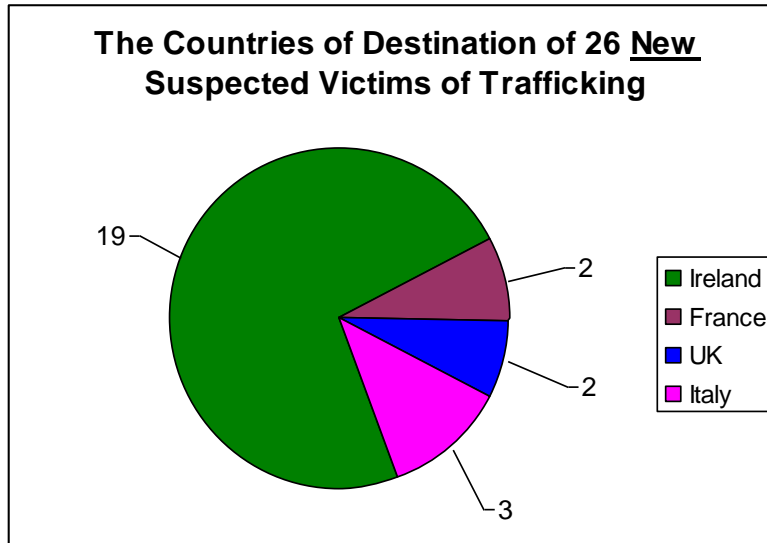
Graph 4.3: Countries of Origin of 26 new cases of victims of trafficking:



4.4: Countries of destination of the 26 new cases of victims of trafficking

The majority (**19**) of the new cases of victims of trafficking were trafficked directly into and around Ireland. However **7** of the women who were supported as victims of trafficking in 2009 were first trafficked into other European countries (Italy, UK, France) and escaped to Ireland. Ruhama offered these women assistance in recovering from being trafficked.

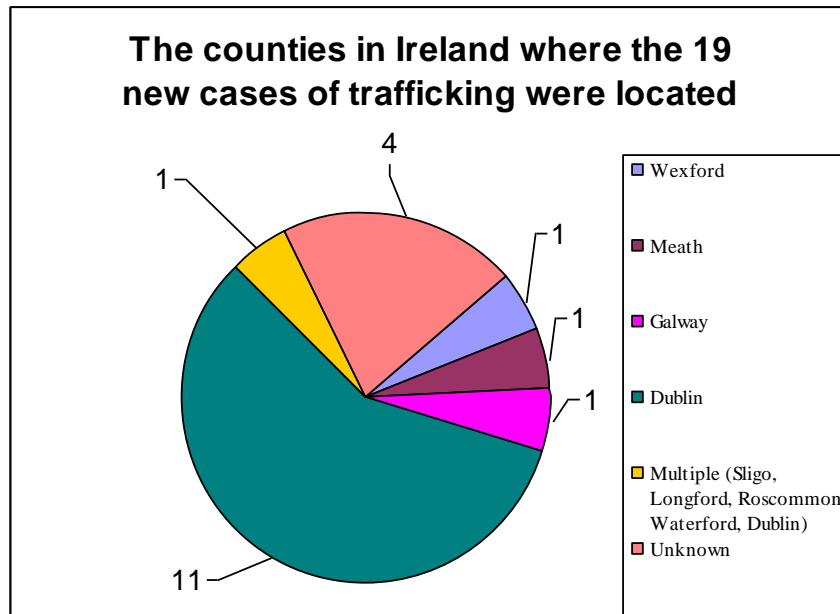
Graph 4.4: Countries of destination of the 26 new cases of victims of trafficking



4.5: The Counties in Ireland where the women were trafficked

Ireland was the destination country of 19 of the 26 new cases in 2009. The women were trafficked to several towns and counties in Ireland. Some women however were not able to identify exactly where they were located except they believed they were ‘somewhere outside of Dublin’. One woman described how she was moved around the country to multiple locations.

Graph 4.5: The counties in Ireland where the 19 new cases were located



5. Development

A very high proportion of the women supported by Ruhama identify a lack of self-esteem, confidence, education and alternative options as major barriers to exiting and recovering from the impacts of involvement in prostitution. Ruhama's Development programme has a special emphasis on personal development, education and training as a means to empowering women towards achieving their own individual goals.

The Development programme runs in-house classes (e.g. literacy, English, computers, art, assertiveness training and stress management) and link women with external training and education programmes. Also, women are connected with career counselors. Some women move onwards to third level courses. All of the women connected with Ruhama's development service continue to have access to a case worker to ensure that her emotional well being and support is attended to, as required, while she engages in training.

During 2009, at any one time, up to 40 women were connected to the Development programmes.

“Now I feel I am somebody.”

This was the quote of one participant in our development programme after she learned to write her name for the first time.

“I have learned how to say no and to choose for myself”

Quote from another participant after completing an assertiveness training course

6. Resettlement

Ruhama helps women rebuild their lives after exiting prostitution. The Resettlement programme has become increasingly busy in recent years and 2009 was no exception. Up to 20 women were supported in accessing transitional and private accommodation and helped with skills to live independently; including support developing budgeting skills. This service is especially important for migrant women who have not lived independently in Ireland until they escaped their pimps or traffickers. It is also essential for women who have spent long periods of time in Direct Provision (asylum seeker's) accommodation, where they had no means to either save or manage a household budget.

7. Conclusion

The above information exemplifies the important work in 2009 that Ruhama is committed to continuing. This is in the interest of the positive outcomes which we see for individual women, lobbying and campaigning on the issue of the fundamental harm of prostitution, for vulnerable individuals who are prostituted and society as a whole. In a society where any woman's body can be bought as a commodity, the implicit message is that all women are potential commodities and in such circumstances we cannot realize respect, dignity & equality for all – principles which underpin the work of Ruhama.