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CHRISTMAS APPEAL FOR DONATIONS

Despite the uncertain times facing the country, the work of Ruhama continues regardless, with one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in Irish society. Ruhama needs your support to help women focus on positive futures; to recover from the trauma of trafficking and prostitution, to build brighter, hopeful lives for themselves and their children.

"Ruhama workers help me every week, they make me realise that I can make it again. They organize classes for me which bring me back to my education; - my lost glory was found! I became positive in my life. I trust Ruhama, they gave me hope, courage, helpful, useful, reliable. I have also learned to trust people again. I am free like a bird with Ruhama at my side." Obioma is from Nigeria – she was trafficked into Ireland for the purpose of prostitution when she was 17 years old.

Contributions of all sizes are welcome and will directly assist women in accessing safe accommodation, counselling, education programmes and so much more. You can post a cheque or you can donate online – see www.ruhama.ie – 'Support Ruhama' for details. We also have a simple direct debit facility, if you would like to support Ruhama on a regular basis. Thank you!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Swedish law on Prostitution	1, 2
Christmas Appeal for Donations	1
Multilingual Awareness Campaign	2
EU Anti-Trafficking Film Festival	2
Ruhama's Development Programme	3
Come Dine at Mine	4
Volunteer News	4
Comings & Goings	4



December 2010



Swedish law on Prostitution

Sarah Benson, CEO

In September, Ruhama participated in a study visit to Sweden as a part of a multi agency delegation that has formed the Dignity Project. Dignity is an EU funded research project examining services provided to victims of human trafficking, with a view to replicating best practice models in partner countries. It is an inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional initiative. The purpose of the visit was to assess the impact of the Swedish law on Prostitution and consider the implications of this for our own work in Ireland.

PROSTITUTION IN SWEDEN

- Legislation prohibiting the purchase of sexual services passed in 1999
- The number of persons exploited in street prostitution has halved since 1999
- The extent of human trafficking is dramatically lower than in neighbouring states
- Tackling the demand from buyers is viewed as the most effective means of reducing exploitation
- Comparative fact – Barcelona, with a population similar to Stockholm (1.5 million), has approximately 20,000 in street prostitution compared to approximately 200 women in Stockholm

The delegation who travelled in addition to Ruhama included the Immigrant Council of Ireland,

Dublin Employment Pact, the Dignity Project co-ordinator and evaluator, representation from the Department of Justice and Law Reform including the Anti Human Trafficking Unit, Garda representation, the HSE, the Legal Aid Board and Sonas Housing, and transnational partners from Scotland and Lithuania.

"The conclusions of the evaluation were extremely positive"

The scope of the visit was broad ranging and comprehensive, with discussions with the Swedish Department of Justice and evaluators of the Swedish legislation: Supreme Court Judge Anna Skarhed, Mrs Gunilla Berglund from the Ministry of Justice, the National Rapporteur on Trafficking Ms Kasja Wahlberg, and the Co-ordinator of Stockholm Prostitution Unit Mr Patrick Cederlof. There were also presentations from ROCs (a Swedish NGO which is a national refuge movement), Jenny Weststrand (Researcher on Prostitution regimes) and Ulrika Rosvall Levin (The Swedish Institute).

In 1999, Sweden passed legislation that prohibits the purchase of a sexual service. The offence comprises purchase of all forms of sexual services, whether

they are purchased on the street, in brothels or in other circumstances. Attempts to buy a sexual service are also punishable. At the same time the legislation recognises that those exploited through prostitution (i.e. those "bought") are vulnerable individuals and they are not criminalised. The rationale for the legislation was based on gender equality and in the context of prostitution being seen as a form of violence against women.

In 2008, the government appointed an Expert Committee to evaluate the implementation of the law and its effect. The commission spoke with women in prostitution, women who had left prostitution, police, social workers, and other key stakeholders and the evaluation was published in July of this year.

The conclusions of the evaluation were extremely positive and included the finding that the number of persons exploited in street prostitution in Sweden has halved since 1999. In addition, there is no evidence of an increase in indoor prostitution. The legislation has also had a radical impact in containing the growth of human trafficking into/out of and through Sweden, despite the proximity of such gateway ports as Murmansk, Riga and Klaipeda. The extent of human trafficking uncovered in Sweden is dramatically lower than in neighbouring comparable jurisdictions, and even more

Continues overleaf...

Gerardine Rowley

EU Anti-Trafficking Film Festival Launches in Dublin

PAGE 2



Róisín Kelly

"Come Dine at Mine" update from Róisín

PAGE 4



Swedish law on Prostitution - continued

radically lower than in “legalised” jurisdictions such as Germany and Holland, whose police forces now regard trafficking as out of control.

The focus of the work on prostitution in Sweden today remains to tackle the demand from buyers as the most effective means in reducing exploitation but there is now an additional emphasis on countering sex trafficking. It is important to note that prostitution and sex trafficking are recognised as being intrinsically linked, with the ban on the purchase of sex providing intelligence on traffickers (through the buyers), and therefore there is less pressure on the victims to provide data and to act as witnesses.

The legislation has not driven the “trade” underground, but has had the effect of greatly reducing the underground trade itself. In addition, the legislation has had an obvious impact in changing normative behaviour in Swedish society. This is reflected in the still growing support for the law across the political spectrum (no party opposes it) and across Swedish society (popular

support has grown from 40% at the time of its introduction to over 70% at the time of the 10-year evaluation).

There is a recognition that those exploited through prostitution are vulnerable individuals and the emphasis is on supporting and assisting them to find alternatives to prostitution rather than criminalising them, which is done with collaboration between Swedish social services and voluntary organisations.

In Ireland, The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 makes it an offence to solicit in a street or public place for the purpose of prostitution. The offence can be committed by the prostitute, the client or a third party - a pimp, for example. The Act also provides for offences such as organising prostitution, coercing or compelling a person to be a prostitute, knowingly living on the earnings of a prostitute, or keeping or managing a brothel. In addition, the Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) Act 2008 makes it an offence to knowingly solicit or importune a trafficked

person, in any place, for the purpose of prostitution.

Currently under the criminal law in Ireland, it is not an offence, in itself, to sell sex. In general, it is not an offence to purchase sex either.



As an organisation that recognises prostitution as a violence against women, and having witnessed the positive endorsement of the law by all the key stakeholders in Sweden, Ruhama will be campaigning for the adoption of a similar model in Ireland. We believe this to be the most effective way to tackle demand for the purchase of sex and to benefit those exploited in the sex industry.

We welcome as a very positive initial step, the compilation of a report by the representative of the Department of Justice, who was part of the delegation. The Minister of Justice has subsequently asked the Attorney General to examine the issue from a legal and constitutional perspective.



Multilingual Awareness Campaign

Gerardine Rowley, Policy and Communications Manager

Prostitution has always been clandestine in nature but during the past decade there have been some significant changes in the Irish sex trade, which have left it even more difficult for Ruhama to make contact with women involved in prostitution. Some of these defining changes include the fact that most prostitution is happening ‘off-street’ in apartments and the majority of women are migrants. Another challenging factor of today’s sex trade is the increasing role of criminal gangs controlling the women.

Faced with these challenges, this Autumn Ruhama designed multilingual posters, leaflets and business cards for distribution to key service providers throughout the country. Those targeted includes hospitals, drug clinics, refugee services and Garda stations. By raising awareness within these

professional groups and providing them with business cards to give women identified as needing Ruhama’s assistance, we hope more women will access our service.

This awareness raising campaign has been funded by Cosc and the National Development Plan. We would also like to thank the Gardai in the Garda National Immigration Bureau who have coordinated the distribution of Ruhama’s literature to Garda stations throughout the country.



EU Anti Trafficking Day

The Anti-Human Trafficking Unit in the Department of Justice hosted a one day film festival on human trafficking on EU Anti-Trafficking day, 18th October 2010.

Sarah Benson, CEO, Ruhama spoke as part of a panel discussion on sex trafficking following the screening of the Irish film ‘Trafficked’.



Ruhama's Development Programme

Jane McKeon, Development Officer

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, including trafficking. 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.

In 2010, through its involvement with the Dignity Project, Ruhama entered into a pilot programme with financial support from FÁS Social Inclusion Funds Unit, to build on our 20 years experience working with women affected by prostitution by formally developing, running, and evaluating a pre-training programme for some of the most vulnerable and marginalized women in Irish society, who have been trafficked or exploited through prostitution. In recognition of the trauma experienced by this vulnerable target group a specialised model was developed which would provide wrap around support and pre-training in order to prepare participants to be ready to access mainstream and community services in training, education and employment preparation.

This course began in January 2010 and will conclude at the end of the year. 28 women have availed of Ruhama's in-house classes (e.g. literacy, English, computers, art, assertiveness training and stress management) and have been linked with external training and education programmes. The women also avail of professional career path planning which is sensitive towards and appropriate to their individual circumstances.

This project is situated within the wider long term services provided by Ruhama so that when the woman goes on to access training or education or employment, the Ruhama service remains there for the woman as a continuous support for as long as she requires it, thus providing a safety net for her, until

she decides she is independent and can manage on her own. Links and advocacy to appropriate education and training opportunities including VEC and FÁS and other community based initiatives and as appropriate, to the FÁS Employment Service and or the Local Employment Service are provided when she is ready to navigate that system with support.

While the specific group involved in this project experience low levels of education and face a wide range of barriers, the enthusiasm these women have for education, the strengths they bring to the programme and their desire to participate in training leading to employment provide great inspiration to the Ruhama Team. The most powerful endorsement of the project has come from the women themselves, who met with the evaluator and shared their own views half way through the pilot:

'Learning to trust someone' again was named by every woman as difficult and painful after what they had been subjected to. Some women had been betrayed by someone they knew and whom they had thought cared for them. They also spoke of the 'bad people' around them who subjected them to terrible things.

'We were brought to homes and places with no idea who would be there or how many men...it was very frightening... you could be killed.'

'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.'

Women spoke about building a trusting relationship with one person as being absolutely vital in the beginning to deal with what happened to them.

Being given the time to slowly reveal the reality of being trafficked and exploited in prostitution and not

being judged or blamed, was found to be immensely helpful. Women also felt that without this support it would have been very difficult to go to groups and classes.

'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 have learned never to trust anyone or ask anyone for help.'

Experience of group work was a new experience for many, but a positive experience:

'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.'

Many women spoke of finding hope again and beginning to feel there was a future for them.

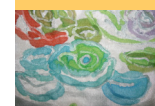
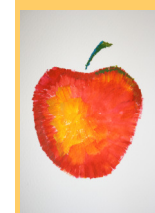
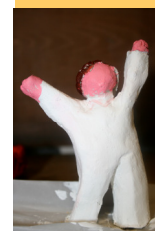
'I want to improve my English, go to school and study. I don't want to be dependent on welfare.'

'I have done work experience in the charity shops and in Tesco. What I want to do is go back and study and work part time.'

'I am so proud of myself that I have achieved so much...I had been told all the time that I was good for nothing and that is not true. I know now I can do anything I want to do because it is possible if you really want it! Even when I was very down and felt just like lying in bed crying I got up and went to my class. I was never, never late.'

Given the marvellous achievements of this extraordinary group of women in this project, it is hoped that it can continue to grow and benefit more women into the future as they re-build their lives and move towards positive self-identified goals, education and employment. The participants will celebrate their graduation in December and we want to congratulate each and every one of them!

Works produced during Autumn art classes



Volunteer News

VOLUNTEER WORK

It's been a busy few months for the Volunteer Programme. Our dedicated team of over 30 volunteers has been tirelessly supporting our work and the vital services we provide. Over 400 hours of time and skill have been contributed in the areas of counselling, outreach, tutoring and administrative support in the past few months.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Rita (Volunteer counsellor) and Tara (Volunteer Co-ordinator) attended a Volunteer Fair organized by Dublin South City Volunteer Centre on the 28th of Sept in Meeting House Square as part of Active Citizenship Week. There was a fun atmosphere with music and food and we were able to speak with many people interested in our work as well as our volunteer programme.

On the 29th of September Ruhama held a Volunteer Information Evening. There was a great turnout of almost 50 interested volunteers. Many thanks to all who came along to hear more about our work. Our Volunteer Training Programme took place throughout November and we are now happy to welcome seventeen new volunteers to the team!



Rita (Volunteer counsellor) and Tara (Volunteer Co-ordinator) at Volunteer Fair organized by Dublin South City Volunteer Centre

A BIG THANK YOU

A big THANK YOU to all our Volunteers for their wonderful work in 2010 and we wish you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

NATIONAL DAY OF VOLUNTEERING

On October 1st we celebrated National Day of Volunteering, recognising the huge contribution that volunteers make not only to Ruhama but the community as a whole. The following poem was written by a woman supported by Ruhama to mark the day.

What is a volunteer?
It's a smiling face that
reflects their tears.
Caring arms to embrace
their fears.
It's the time they give to you
to give you hope,
the future a little glee.
They ask for nothing in return,
A simple smile, a thank you,
All they earn.



Come Dine at Mine

Róisín Kelly, Administrator

At the beginning of October, Ruhama invited its supporters to hold a Come Dine at Mine evening in support of Ruhama. The campaign has been very successful, with 35 supporters requesting the hosting packs and monies still being returned as this newsletter goes to print.

The main feedback has been that hosting a dinner party was fun and a really enjoyable way for people to raise money for a charity they feel passionately about. The competition was also popular among those who fancy themselves as budding masterchefs and the judging panel, made up of restaurant critic Lucinda O'Sullivan and Ruhama's CEO Sarah Benson, had a difficult time choosing the top three. Our thanks go to Absolutely Organic who provided the

first, second and third prizes of organic hampers to these winners.

A number of hosts decided to hold their evening in the new year so we look forward to hearing about their nights also. We plan to continue the campaign next year with new prizes! Many thanks to the hosts who organised a great 'night in' for their guests and raised funds for Ruhama. too.



If you would like to host your own Come Dine at Mine evening, please get in touch with Róisín for a hosting pack by calling 01 8360292 or emailing roisin@ruhama.ie

Comings and Goings

VOLUNTEERS LEAVING

Sadly we had to say farewell to four very wonderful volunteers over the last few months, Catherine, Alison, Gemma and Helena. Catherine has been volunteering with Ruhama almost four years as a literacy tutor. Her vast experience, patience and kindness have helped so many women progress to new opportunities. Catherine herself returned to her native Scotland. Alison has volunteered with Ruhama for almost two years as a reflexologist. She provided so much care, understanding and laughter to women and staff alike. (Not to mention the wonderful eggs she'd bring in from time to time!).

Gemma has been a huge presence in Ruhama for almost 16 years. She has been involved in the outreach van, befriending and in the last few years been a stalwart support of our administrative and financial department. Gemma has been a great source of knowledge, strength and kindness

to all who she encountered. Helena has been a part of Ruhama intermittently almost since its foundation. Helena has been involved in nearly every aspect of the organization from outreach, administration and also held the post of Director. She has brought unwavering dedication, respect for women and good humour to the organisation. We wish to sincerely thank Helena, Gemma, Catherine and Alison for the time they spent with us and wish them the very best with their future endeavors.

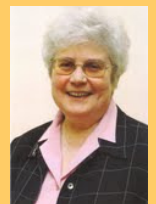


Sheila Crowley

NEW SERVICE MANAGER

Ruhama is delighted to welcome to our team, Sheila Crowley, as our new Service Manager. Sheila has a wealth of experience working with and

empowering vulnerable people and has an academic background in Community Development as well as Gender and Women's Studies. With the excitement of a new addition to the team there is also the sadness of a departure and all of the board, staff, & volunteers of Ruhama would like to wish Mary Mangan, the outgoing Service Manager the very best for the future in her retirement and to express our sincere gratitude for her wonderful contribution to the organisation over the last 7 years.



Mary Mangan

CONGRATULATIONS & THANKS

Congratulations to Róisín and Mark on their marriage in December. We wish you a long and happy life together! And finally many thanks to Sara for a great job in pulling this newsletter together for us.