

RedR, London, June 2014

Sometimes, a speechmaker is presented with words written by someone who may well know what they are talking about, but perhaps may not be an expert in how a thing should be said.

This evening, however, I am about to share something quite different. It is not a story told by RedR about its work, but a story told by a man who – along with thousands of others across the world – embodies what RedR is about: a person who has experienced some truly terrifying things, but survived them through his own determination and initiative.

This man, who I met in El Fasher, the capital city of North Darfur, Sudan, came through that extraordinary adversity – in his case a war waged against him and his people by his own government – and then sought the means to rebuild his life, to help himself and his family to recover.

RedR, as in cases all over the world, stepped in and provided not just aid organisations with the capacity they needed to be able to deliver the basics – food, water, shelter; the items without which people cannot survive – but also provided this man with the means: training, education and advice; to enable him to create something new, and something better, for him, for the people he loves, and for others, like him, who have suffered things many of us are lucky enough to be unable even to imagine.



This, at its heart, is what RedR does. And this is how he describes his experience:

‘We had been sleeping to 7am. We heard helicopters. People talked on the radio to our leaders. People told us: ‘understand: soldiers are coming.’

‘Me and my friends were children then. We saw cars coming. We ran. Women and children were lost. We carried those who were killed. We lost everything.

‘A local organisation gave us a tent. We used that tent to live in for five years.

‘After elections, the government came to the camp where we lived. My tribe had been involved with the rebels. The government said it wanted to get all the members of the tribe. They took a 70 year-old man. They were kicking him. I watched it happen, but I could do nothing. He was part of my tribe.

‘I ran to another camp, with my mother. I lost my sister at that time. But the military was there, killing people. So from there we had to leave for another camp.

‘We did not want to live in camps, but we had nothing. We couldn’t get away. We had no possessions and no transport.

‘There is no healthcare at all. There is not enough water. Previously, food had been distributed to tents, but now, nothing. Food was brought maybe once every two months. More and more people are living in camps, but they receive less help than ever, they feel abandoned.

‘This makes people – especially young people – turn to weapons. Some join the army, which is not a good life for a young child, but others make problems, they become robbers. If you have a mobile phone and use it, they shoot you and take it from you.



‘But also at the camp, I heard first about RedR. The organisation I work for now, El Abassy, found me at the camp and they helped me to organise myself, and to improve my life. I took one RedR course, and because of that, I was able to join El Abassy and help my community. It gave me real

purpose.

‘We go to see people. We help people to help themselves. Mainly people at the camps.

‘Displaced people have problems. Without help, they will think negatively, which can lead to make crime or even suicide. We need to make people know

that they will survive. Even though many have lost their house, or lost family members, we show them how they can continue their lives.

‘We have vocational training, and craft training, so people can make things, and get money so their children can go to school, get medical care and water, which is central to everything.

‘On one occasion at the camp, we worked with a 16 year-old girl. She had been raped and was pregnant as a result. Her family wanted to throw her out. They thought she had brought shame to them. They wanted to throw the child away. We worked with the family, and showed them it was not the girl’s fault, or her son’s fault.

‘Today, the boy is part of his wider family, and is at school. He and his mother live together with their family and are supported by them. And she also contributes. She makes hats and bags and sells them. I have one of her hats and I’m proud to wear it.

‘The war has torn Darfur apart. People have become hopeless. Enormous numbers are living in towns without jobs. Hate among citizens has increased. There is a lack of guidance and leadership. Illiteracy has increased. People have no income, no produce. They are jobless.

‘But there is light at the end of the tunnel. What we get from RedR.



‘What RedR is doing is teaching us. Teaching us how to live our lives. Caring about youth, teaching us how to help communities. That’s proved here in this community and the people we have helped. They must be part of the picture, of the future. We don’t need that

made for us, we need the skills to make it ourselves.

‘I have taken many RedR courses. Its training helps us to continue to exist.

‘Without RedR training courses, my life would be much worse. And, the lives of all the people, thousands of people in the camps, who we help, would also be worse.

‘So my experience of training with RedR has been very positive indeed.

‘I am now able to help thousands of people, I have a job, something with meaning.

‘If there was no RedR, I would not be here. I would be living on handouts if they were not there.

‘Maybe my stomach would be full, but my head and soul would be empty.



‘My name is Issam Hamid. I am Project Manager for El Abassy, and RedR taught me to help my community.’