



## **Proud to be a place of safety for refugees and asylum seekers**

Hello everybody, first I'd like to thank people of Swansea for giving me a safe place to live. I also thank Swansea City of Sanctuary and Oxfam Cymru for giving us the opportunity to speak here today.

My name is Abdalla Ali, I come from Darfur in Sudan and claimed asylum on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2015. I am sure many of you will already know or have heard about the ongoing crisis in the Darfur region, since 2003.

More than 10 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) (including Oxfam) requested permission from the Sudanese government to gain access to the affected areas in order for their staff to carry out humanitarian work in order to protect civilians and aid workers. However, the government forced those INGOs to close their operations and leave the country within 24 hours in 2009.

Back home, I worked for over 11 years with INGOs, including with Oxfam. Working in this area led me to see how little human life was respected and due to challenges I decided to leave the country.

It's often said that determination of an asylum claim is the end of the story, but it's not the case in my experience. I got my status but my National Insurance number and my Biometric Residency Permit were created with two different names, I returned the residency permit on November 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 and I have requested an amendment to my national insurance number on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2016, after approximately 8 months despite repeated and persistent enquiries and also the support of my M.P.

I have learnt and experienced the difficulties of the system, the lack of coordination and recognition that there are people behind the labels but the people of Swansea have welcomed me warmly.

Since I have been in Swansea, I thought it essential to volunteer and have contributed to the work undertaken by Swansea City of Sanctuary, Ethnic Youth Support Team, Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council, British Red Cross, African Community Centre and Welsh Refugee Council.

Let me end by with the following suggestions:

I urge my asylum seeking and refugee colleagues to share their experiences with stakeholders, with honesty and respect.

Improve the accountability mechanisms of the system.

Finally, can I request that the audience continue supporting asylum seekers and refugees in overcoming those challenges.