Sankofa Foundation: making a difference in Ghana

By Dr. Awil Mohamoud
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Sankofa Foundation was set up by Ghanaian Diaspora in the Netherlands to contribute to the development in Ghana. Sankofa supports and collaborates with local NGO’s working in the field of Agriculture, Education, Gender Advocacy and Income Generation Projects in Rural Areas. The target groups of the foundation in Ghana are chiefly the destitute and marginalized sections in society such as women, children and unemployed youth who mostly live in the rural areas. These groups are badly neglected by the government institutions of Ghana because they do not live in the urban cities. As George Duncan, the chairman of the Sankofa Foundation stated, ‘Ghanaian government policies do not take into consideration how small farms in the rural areas are surviving.’

As noted above, Sankofa implements different projects in Ghana. However, this short article addresses one of the projects, a family poultry project because of its positive outcome. Sankofa started this community development project in Ghana in partnership with the Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF), GAPNET and the Asutuare Women’s Desk in Asutuare area in Greater Accra in 2005.

The project which is currently dubbed “Sankofa Family Poultry Project” is a response to the damaging impact that the Netherlands poultry had on the Ghanaian poultry. Thanks to the EU subsidies, Dutch poultry farmers overproduce chickens which they cheaply dump in markets in Ghana and in other countries in Africa.

And this dumping practice has completely destroyed the poultry farms in Ghana and also the subsistence livelihood of the Ghanaian farmers in the rural areas. The economic tragedy of the Ghanaian poultry farmers inflicted by the dumping of the Dutch chickens in Ghana has been shown live on the Dutch TV (Netwerk) on Wednesday evening 11 July 2007.

This economic tragedy of the Ghanaian poultry farmers, one of many examples, is indeed questioning the morality of the EU subsidy which is stimulating the farmers in Europe to overproduce so as to remain receiving it and then dump the surplus to Africa destroying the farming economy on the continent. The Sankofa Family Poultry Project is attempting to offset some of the economic hardships in the rural areas of Ghana and is indeed making a difference on the ground.

Sankofa first started supporting 10 destitute rural women by providing each one of them a bamboo chicken coupe, 50 birds at point of lay. Sankofa also provided the beneficiaries training, veterinary drugs and feed to the birds for 3 months which was unusual in the rural areas of Ghana. In the second phase of the project, Sankofa in cooperation with Oxfam Novib has provided 32 women beneficiaries with 50 layer birds for keeping as a source of income generating activity for household needs.
Furthermore, the project constructed 42 poultry houses for the women beneficiaries, a new thing in such rural area. In this way the project is modernizing the traditional way of poultry keeping in the area which is associated with many problems such as rampant outbreaks of diseases and pests, exposure to predators and weather, etc.

Within a short period of time the project became a successful experiment and the interest for poultry keeping in the locality has started growing. For example, even the local banks in the area such as Dangme Rural Bank are now willing to provide credit facilities to the beneficiaries. More importantly, a few weeks ago, the national television of Ghana showcased the poultry project live as an example of a successful community development project in the country which is effectively contributing to the poverty reduction of the rural farmers. The uniqueness for the project is that it is creating a livelihood economy which the beneficiaries can sustain themselves by selling the eggs of the chickens to the markets and earning incomes with which they buy food, medicine, clothing and pay school fees for their children.

Sankofa Foundation is a good example of how some of the Diaspora organizations are creatively contributing to development in their countries of origin. In this regard, the Sankofa Family Poultry Project in Ghana is a catalyst of a positive exception and a best practice that needs to be built on, sustained, supported and strengthened.