

Office of Nana Frimpomaa
Chairperson and Leader
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PRESS RELEASE
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Addressing the Issue of Negligence: Akosombo Spillage Disaster in Ghana

Over the past few weeks, I have been saddened by the level of suffering and the feeling of hopelessness expressed by victims of the avoidable catastrophe negligently caused by the spillage of the Akosombo dam by the Volta River Authority (VRA). To all the benevolent individuals, groups, faith-based organizations, corporate Ghana who have kept alive the victims by providing basic needs -water, food, shelter and medication, the entire country appreciate your kindness and support during these extremely difficult moments. We strongly believe that with your generous contributions, we can help alleviate their suffering and restore hope and dignity to their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, the recent Akosombo dam spillage disaster in Ghana has raised significant concerns regarding the negligence exhibited by state institutions involved. Recognizing the catastrophic impact of this incident, it becomes imperative to address these concerns swiftly and ensure accountability for all parties responsible.

1. Background:

The Akosombo spillage disaster occurred due to the sudden release of water from the Akosombo Dam, resulting in severe flooding and significant damage to lives, properties, and the environment in surrounding areas. While natural disasters cannot always be avoided, it is the responsibility of state institutions to mitigate risks and take necessary precautions to prevent such incidents from escalating into catastrophes.

2. Current Situation:

The immediate consequences of this dam spillage are alarming with twenty-six thousand (26,000) people most of who are children and aged who have been displaced, lacking access to clean water, food, and shelter. Thousands of homes have been totally

submerged and collapsed in the water, all major and minor roads have been cut, hospitals and schools are not visible, market centres and livestock cannot be traced. The spillage has caused so much pain and anguish rendering a total blackout of over 100 communities including 30 communities in Central Tongu, 22 Communities in South Tongu, 23 Communities in North Tongu, 10 communities in Keta, 16 communities in Anglo and many others in Ada East and Asuogyaman.

The affected population is in constant need of emergency assistance to survive, recover, and rebuild their lives.

3. An Emerging Outbreak of Water Borne Infections

As the floodwaters continue to rise, they carry with them a threat as dangerous as the floods themselves. The inundation of latrines and open defecation areas has raised alarming concerns about the contamination of water sources. This contamination, largely invisible to the naked eye, harbors a host of waterborne diseases, from diarrhea to typhoid. The threat is particularly pressing in communities where the floodwaters have become an inescapable part of daily life.

“Many in the affected communities are still using the flood water for household purposes. The water, tainted with human waste and other pollutants, is utilized for everything from cooking and cleaning to bathing. In these circumstances, the risk of waterborne diseases spiraling into an epidemic is palpably high”. Stella Kumedzro, the Regional Environmental Health Officer

4. A Healthcare System Under Siege

The healthcare system in the region is grappling to respond to this looming crisis. Already strained under the weight of the ongoing pandemic, the floods have further disrupted healthcare delivery. Access to clean water and sanitation facilities, pillars of disease prevention, has been severely compromised across the district.

Michael Kofi Zigah, the North Tongu District Health Director, highlights the enormity of the challenge. The floods have not only made it difficult for healthcare workers to reach the affected communities, but they have also made it harder for community members to access healthcare facilities. Thus, the region is caught in a double bind, facing a potential health crisis and a hamstrung healthcare system.

Regrettably, it is evident that the disaster was exacerbated by a series of negligent actions and oversights within the responsible state institutions. This negligence includes:

- **Failure to properly monitor**
- **Failure to evaluate dam capacity**
- **Inadequate communication of potential risks to communities,**
- **Insufficient emergency preparedness measures.**

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, it is evident that, the Volta River Authority (VRA) Ghana Meteorological Service, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Agency have been sleeping on the job yet enjoying the poor tax payers money.

Our primary concern as a state is to ensure prompt and comprehensive actions are taken to rectify these incidents and prevent future occurrences. I urge the relevant state institutions to embrace transparency and accountability, allowing for a thorough investigation into the root causes of the disaster. It is vital that those responsible are held accountable for their actions or inactions.

To achieve this, **the very first and honest action to be taken by these duty bearers based on conscience is to step aside** while the following key steps are taken:

1. Independent Investigation: Establish a fully independent investigation committee comprised of experts in hydrology, engineering, environmental science, and relevant stakeholders. This committee should conduct an impartial inquiry into the factors contributing to the disaster and identify parties responsible.

2. Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks: Review and strengthen existing regulations and guidelines for the operation, monitoring, and maintenance of dams and other water management facilities. Implement regular inspections and accountability mechanisms to ensure compliance.

3. Community Engagement and Education: Foster open channels of communication with communities residing in vulnerable areas. Establish regular information sharing platforms to keep these communities informed about potential risks and emergency procedures, empowering them to make informed decisions to mitigate their vulnerability.

4. Emergency Preparedness: Implement comprehensive emergency response plans and conduct regular drills to enhance preparedness among relevant institutions and communities. Ensure access to adequate resources, such as life-saving equipment and emergency shelters, to effectively respond to disasters.

5. Rehabilitation and Compensation: Expedite the provision of required support and compensation to affected individuals and communities, facilitating their recovery and rebuilding processes.

While I acknowledge the challenges that the responsible state institutions face, the Akosombo spillage disaster highlights the urgent need for systematic improvements in disaster management and decision-making processes. Safeguarding the lives and well-being of communities should be paramount, and this requires a collective effort from all stakeholders involved.

I call upon the government led by H.E Nana Addo, civil society organizations and the international community to keep supporting and monitor the implementation of these crucial measures. By addressing the issue of negligence and promoting accountability, we can ensure a safer and resilient environment for all Ghanaians.

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Long live mother Ghana

Forward Ever

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