UPSILON PI DELTA INSTITUTE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Statement: Devastating Impact of Akosombo Dam Spillage

Accra, November 2, 2023- Following a field visit to the victims of the Akosombo Dam spillage, UPDI would like to draw the public's attention to the dire situation that has unfolded in the affected communities. The spillage, resulting from a culmination of factors including rising water levels and heavy rainfall, has had a profound negative impact, and some positive observations highlighting the resilience of the affected people.

Negatives:

1. **Poor Preparation towards the Spillage**: It is evident that inadequate preparations were not made to address the escalating situation, resulting in severe consequences for the affected communities. The VRA monitoring failed to incorporate geographic information systems and variables within the Volta basin from the headwaters of the Fouta Djallon highlands in Guinea, weather patterns in Mali and Burkina Faso as well as the Oti River headwaters in northern Togo and Benin.
2. **Uncoordinated Management of the Relief Process:** The relief process has been marred by under-staffing and a reliance on volunteers who may lack the necessary professional expertise and capacity to address the complex challenges posed by the spillage. NADMO, an organisation set up in response to migration challenges of the 1980s has been found to be slow in responding to contemporary human insecurities and dynamic changes within the sphere of the risk society and forced migrations pose to humanity.
3. **Government's Sluggish Response:** The government's response to providing support has been marked by delays and sluggishness, which has exacerbated the suffering of the affected population. While many government functionaries claim that sensitisation efforts were carried out prior to the dam spillage, the response of the state agencies shows clearly that the state was unprepared and unaware of the consequences of the dam spillage. The question that begs to be answered is, does the government of Ghana has an emergency response cabinet, like the COBRA?
4. **Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** Transparency in the management of the disaster as well as coordination, mobilization and distribution of relief items has been lacking. There is a pressing need for transparency and accountability in the mobilisation and distribution of relief items not only to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most but also to avoid duplications. Relatedly, the absence of a comprehensive master plan for the relief operation has hindered the effective allocation of resources and support.
5. **Poor Simulation Exercise:** The spillage response was hampered by inadequate and to some extent, a complete absence of well-coordinated simulation exercises, which should have been conducted to prepare for such events in order to minimize the human and material cost.

6. **Political Insensitivity and Poor Judgments:** Politically insensitive statements by the President of Ghana Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo that sought to draw a linkage between voting patterns of the affected communities and government's response coupled with the blame-laden comments of Ghana's Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, Freda Prempeh suggesting that the affected communities refused to be evacuated from the areas did not only project the government in a negative light but also reduced the state's legitimacy in responding to the crisis paving way for non-state actors to dominate relief efforts. The unthought-through inter-ministerial committee set up to address the havoc, the withdrawal of the military from affected communities and their subsequent reinstatement of the operation has also had adverse effects on the relief efforts.

7. **Delays in Evacuating the Deceased:** Delays in evacuating deceased individuals from morgues have caused distress to families and hindered the proper handling of the deceased posing further health risks to survivors of the disaster.

Positives:

1. **Resilience of the Affected People:** The affected individuals have shown remarkable resilience by prioritizing safety and working together to overcome the challenges posed by the spillage.

2. **Coordination between MPs and MCEs:** A positive aspect has been the strong coordination between Members of Parliament (MPs) and Municipal and District Chief Executives (MCEs) in the affected areas, which has facilitated response efforts.

3. **Community Support:** Communities have rallied together to support each other during this crisis, providing a glimmer of hope in the face of adversity. The role of the media, civil society organisations and individual philanthropists is worth mentioning.

Recommendations:

1. The observations made during UPDI's field visit underscore the urgent need for a coordinated and effective response to address the devastating effects of the Akosombo Dam spillage.

2. UPDI call upon all stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the international community, to prioritize the well-being and recovery of the affected communities.

3. Transparent and accountable relief efforts are essential to ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most, and the resilience and community spirit displayed by the affected people should be acknowledged and supported.

4. Missing in the debate amidst the chaos and lack of proper planning, is a discussion on the life span/expiry date of the dam. The decommissioning of the dam and the subsequent rebuilding should be brought forward in order to have enough time to drain the dam reservoir.

5. A new dam should incorporate a sustainable design that minimises flooding upstream and downstream of the dam.

6. The need to fast-track the completion of the Gambaga Dam in North East Region of Ghana in order to serve as a holding reservoir for the Bagre Dam in Burkina Faso, which contributes to rising water in the Volta Lake.

7. Periodic and consistent desilting of the Keta Lagoon and the Volta River estuary at Ada should be prioritised.

8. Above all, a comprehensive human impact assessment aimed at gaining insight into the economic, environmental, social, health, physical and food insecurities and impacts need to be carried through with the ultimate objective of supporting affected individuals and communities, reducing vulnerabilities and professing workable response mechanisms for future disaster of this nature.

Conclusion:

UPDI urges all concerned parties to work together to alleviate the suffering caused by the spillage and to ensure a more prepared and resilient future for these communities.

For media inquiries, please contact Dr. Gideon Agbey (Executive Director at UPDI) or send an email to info@updiafrica.com.

ABOUT UPDI

Upsilon Pi Delta Institute (UPDI) is a civil society organisation based in Accra, with representatives across Ghana.

We seek to contribute to the national development discourse and debates, asking critical questions and illuminating subject matters that are dear to the heart of many Ghanaians in particular, Africans and the international community.

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