



MFWA's Language Monitoring Report:

Conciliatory And Pacifist Remarks Dominate Radio Discussions, Oman FM Remains Recalcitrant

Radio discussions over the past two weeks (August 18 – 31, 2013) were generally dominated by the Election Petition, the Verdict, and its aftermath. Even though there was a general feeling of anxiety as to what the fallouts of the Verdict may be, the findings from Media Foundation for West Africa's monitoring of language use on radio has shown that tensions to a large extent were calmed by the extensive use of conciliatory and pacifist expressions and general calls for peace on the various radio networks monitored.

In all the 301 programmes monitored on the 26 target radio stations across the country, the use of conciliatory and pacifist expressions was the most dominant. Most of the people who featured on the programmes monitored – callers, panellists, political activists, traditional rulers, ministers of state and leaders of the various political parties – called for peace and urged Ghanaians to remain calm and united after the Verdict.

Typically, all 26 radio stations monitored recorded a lot of conciliatory remarks. However, four radio stations recorded unacceptable and inappropriate expressions. Altogether, 13 indecent expressions were recorded over the two-week monitoring period with Oman FM alone registering 10 of them. In spite of this finding, the incidence of indecent expressions is generally on a decline.

Finding on Category of Expressions Used

Over the two-week period (August 18 – 31, 2013), a total of 301 programmes were monitored on the 26 radio stations selected for the language monitoring project. Countless conciliatory and pacifist remarks were made on all the radio stations. However, 13 notable indecent expressions were recorded and analysed. The 13 expressions were made up of four (4) categories of expressions:

- Provocative Remarks (4)
- Remarks calling for Confrontation and/or Violence (4)
- Insulting and Offensive comments (3)
- Unsubstantiated Allegations (2)

Specifically, in the week before the Verdict (August 18 – 24, 2013), nine (9) indecent expressions were recorded. In the week the Verdict was pronounced (August 25 – 31, 2013), the incidence of indecent expressions reduced; only four (4) indecent remarks were recorded. In fact, most radio discussions were inundated with peace calls. The breakdown of the remarks recorded over the two week is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Categories of Expressions Recorded

Category of Expression	Period of Monitoring		
	Week Before Verdict (August 18-24, 2013)	Verdict Week (August 25-31, 2013)	TOTAL
Provocative Remarks	2	2	4
Remarks calling for confrontation/ violence	2	2	4
Insulting/ Offensive Comments	3	0	3
Unsubstantiated Allegations	2	0	2
TOTAL	9	4	13

On the day of the Verdict in particular, August 29, 2013, no indecent expression was recorded. However, the day after the Verdict (August 30, 2013) recorded two (2) confrontational remarks.

Expressions Used and Political Party Affiliation

Twelve (12) of the 13 indecorous expressions recorded over the period were made by eight (8) affiliates of three (3) political parties, the New Patriotic

Party (NPP), National Democratic Party (NDP), and the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP). The remaining one (1) was a replay of an indecent expression by the Accra-based *Oman FM*. The distribution of expressions used and the party political affiliation of the culprits is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Expressions Used by Political Party Affiliation of Culprits

Expressions Used	Political Party Affiliation				
	NPP	NDP	PPP	Not Known	Total
Provocative Remarks	2	2	0	0	4
Remarks calling for confrontation/ violence	4	0	0	0	4
Insulting/ Offensive Comments	0	1	1	1	3
Unsubstantiated Allegations	2	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	8	3	1	1	13

Categories of Indecent Expressions and the Culprits

Below are the names of the individuals who used the indecent expressions, the radio stations and the dates on which the expressions were made:

Provocative Remarks

1. Mr Ernest Owusu Bempah, Deputy Communications Director of the NDP – on *Oman FM's Evening News* of August 20, 2013
2. Mr Ernest Owusu Bempah, Deputy Communications Director of the NDP – on *Oman FM's National Agenda* of August 22, 2013
3. Mr Yaw Adomako Baafi, a member of the NPP's Communications Team – on *Oman FM's Boiling Point*, aired on 27, August 2013
4. Mr. Stephen Amoah of the NPP – on *Oman FM's Boiling Point* programme of August 27, 2013

Confrontational Remarks

1. A serial caller by name KK of the Concerned NPP Supporters – in an interview on *Oman FM's Evening News* of August 21, 2013
2. Hon. Simon Osei Mensah, NPP MP for Bosomtwe Constituency – **2 remarks** on *Oman FM's National Agenda* of August 30, 2013
3. A caller who identified himself as Eric Tee and an NPP sympathiser **restated** the remarks made by Mr Stephen Atubigah and Mr Hopeson Adoye on *Space FM's Morning Flight* programme of August 19, 2013

Insulting and Offensive Comments

1. *Oman FM* **replayed** an insulting and offensive remark purported to have been made by Mr Yaw Boateng Gyan (National Organiser of the NDC) during the station's *Evening News* of August 20, 2013
2. Mr Ernest Owusu Bempah, Deputy Communications Director of the NDP – on *Oman FM's Evening News* of August 20, 2013 (in an interview to respond to what Mr Yaw Boateng Gyan was purported to have said)
3. Mr Charles Owusu, a member of the PPP Communications Team – on *Peace FM's Midday News* of August 23, 2013

Unsubstantiated Allegations

1. Mr Yaw Adomako Baafi, a member of the NPP's Communications Team – on *Oman FM's Boiling Point* programme of August 22, 2013
2. Mr Komfo Adu of the NPP – on *Oxy FM's Oxy Talk Morning Show* of August 12, 2013

Note: As a policy, the MFWA does not publish the indecent expressions recorded. This is informed by the fact that rebroadcasting the specific indecent expressions will amplify such expressions and their potentially negative ramifications. The specific expressions made by people cited in our reports are, however, available at the MFWA.

Radio Stations and Categories of Expressions Recorded

As indicated earlier, conciliatory and pacifist expressions dominated all the 26 radio stations monitored. It is, however, worth mentioning that in the case of Bolga-based *Radio A1*, the station officials (Station Manager, Head of Programmes, and Sports Presenter) took turns on their station to appeal to Ghanaians, especially the youth, to exercise restraint and accept whichever Verdict was given at the end of the day. The MFWA commends the management of the station for directly contributing to the peace cause.

In the midst of the conciliatory expressions, some radio stations were still being used to send/exchange unpleasant remarks against opponents. In this regard, the Accra-based *Oman FM* was in the lead as it recorded the highest number (10) of indecent expressions over the two-week monitoring period. The specifics of the indecent expressions recorded on the four (4) radio stations is presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Radio Stations on which Indecent Expressions were recorded

Radio Station	Expressions Used				
	Provocative Remarks	Remarks calling for Violence/Confrontation	Insulting/Offensive Comments	Unsubst. Allegations	Total
<i>Oman FM</i>	4	3	2	1	10
<i>Space FM</i>	0	1	0	0	1
<i>Peace FM</i>	0	0	1	0	1
<i>Oxy FM</i>	0	0	0	1	1
TOTAL	4	4	3	2	13

Conclusion

In the lead up to the Verdict on the Election Petition, a lot of peace campaigns and general sensitisation activities were carried out by Government Institutions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including the MFWA, and Media Groups/Associations. These and the general calls for peace by individuals largely contributed to the dominance of conciliatory expressions on the airwaves during the monitoring period.

The MFWA commends all Ghanaians, the leadership of the various political parties and other CSOs for contributing in diverse ways to stem violence during the adjudication of the Election Petition case and most especially, after the Verdict was given. In particular, the MFWA commends the management and moderators of the various radio stations for supporting the campaign for decency on the airwaves in those critical moments.

The MFWA is, however, calling on the management, moderators and presenters of *Oman FM* to effectively play their gatekeeping role to, as much

as possible, minimise the incidence of inappropriate and unacceptable expressions that are daily aired on their network.

As debates about the Verdict continue, the MFWA is again calling on all stakeholders to be responsible in our utterances to continue to safeguard the peace of our dear country.

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The MFWA is a regional independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Accra. It was founded in 1997 to defend and promote the rights and freedom of the media and of expression.

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