

MONITORING OF INDECENT CAMPAIGN

LANGUAGE ON RADIO

FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1-30, 2016

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1.0 Introduction

With barely two months for Ghana to go to the polls, political campaigning in the country has become intense. Political party officials, supporters and affiliates continue to actively engage the electorates through various media platforms in the country, particularly, radio.

The use of incendiary comments, particularly on radio by these political actors have become commonplace in the course of campaigning and remains a concern to many, including the security services, traditional and religious leaders, civil society organisations and sections of the general public.

To help bring the phenomenon under control, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), with funding support from OSIWA, STAR-Ghana, the EU (through Socioserve-Ghana) and the Embassy of France in Ghana, is implementing the project, **Promoting Issues-based and Decent Language Campaigning for a Peaceful Elections in Ghana in 2016**. The project is aimed at contributing to ensuring issues-based, decent-language campaigning and peaceful elections.

The nine-month (April-December 2016) project involves the daily monitoring of selected radio programmes to track and report on the use of hate speech and other indecent expressions by politicians and activists. It also assesses the performance of presenters or hosts in their handling of programmes and whether or not they tolerate the use of indecent language on their programmes. Each target radio station is assigned to a trained monitor who monitors, records and reports on a daily basis to the MFWA. The reports are then collated and analysed by a team of programme staff and researchers at the MFWA. Findings are publicised periodically. This report, however, covers findings for the period of September 1-30, 2016.

2.0 Findings

The findings presented in this report covers monitoring undertaken over the period, September 1-30, 2016. This report covers findings from 60 radio stations monitored under the project. The report identifies the categories of indecent expressions used, political affiliation of those who used indecent expressions and the radio stations on which indecent expression were recorded.

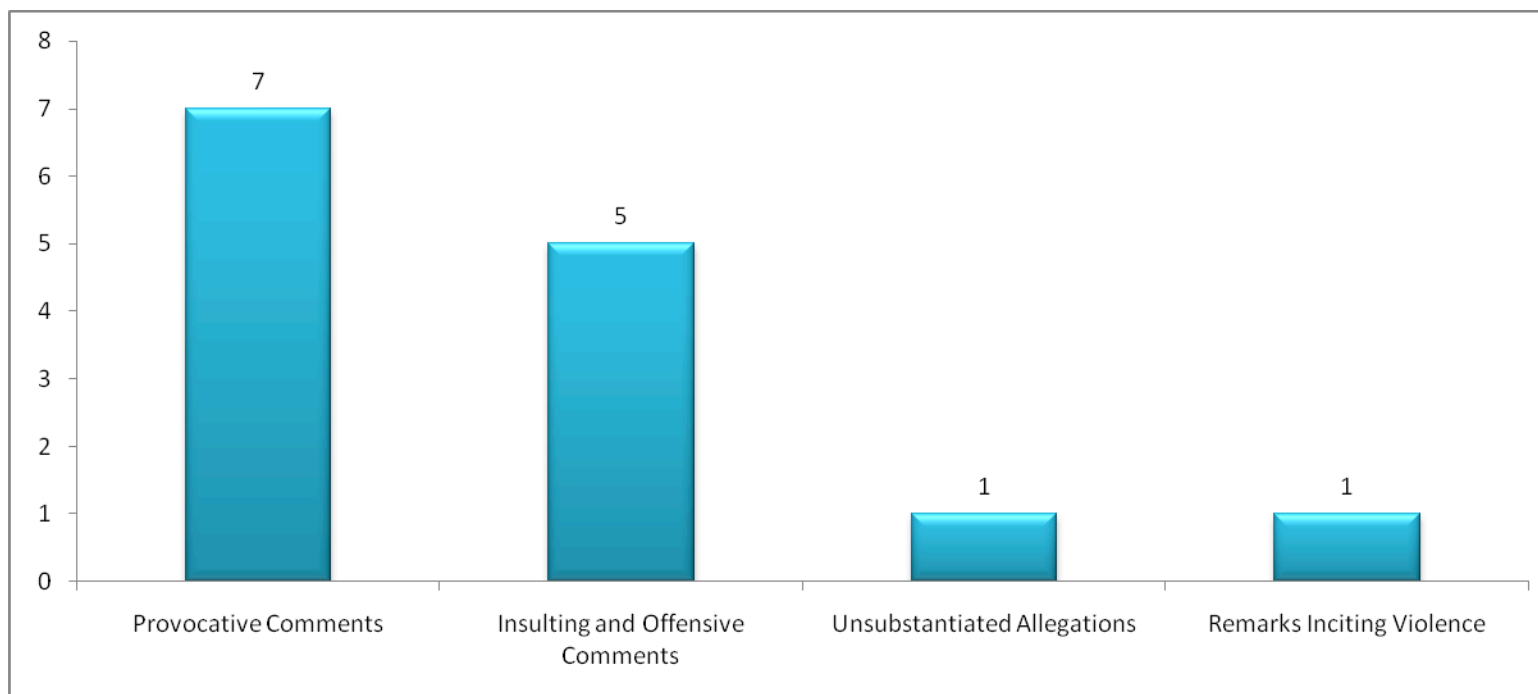
2.1 General Findings

Altogether, **1,906** radio programmes were monitored over the one-month period. The programmes monitored included news bulletins, political and current affairs discussion programmes aired on the 60 radio stations. A total of **14** indecent expressions were recorded during the period.

2.2 Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded

The **14** indecent expressions recorded fell under four categories of expressions: provocative comments, insulting and offensive comments, unsubstantiated allegations and remarks inciting violence. Half of the indecent expressions recorded were provocative in nature. Figure 1 below shows the frequency of use of each of the four categories of indecent expressions recorded.

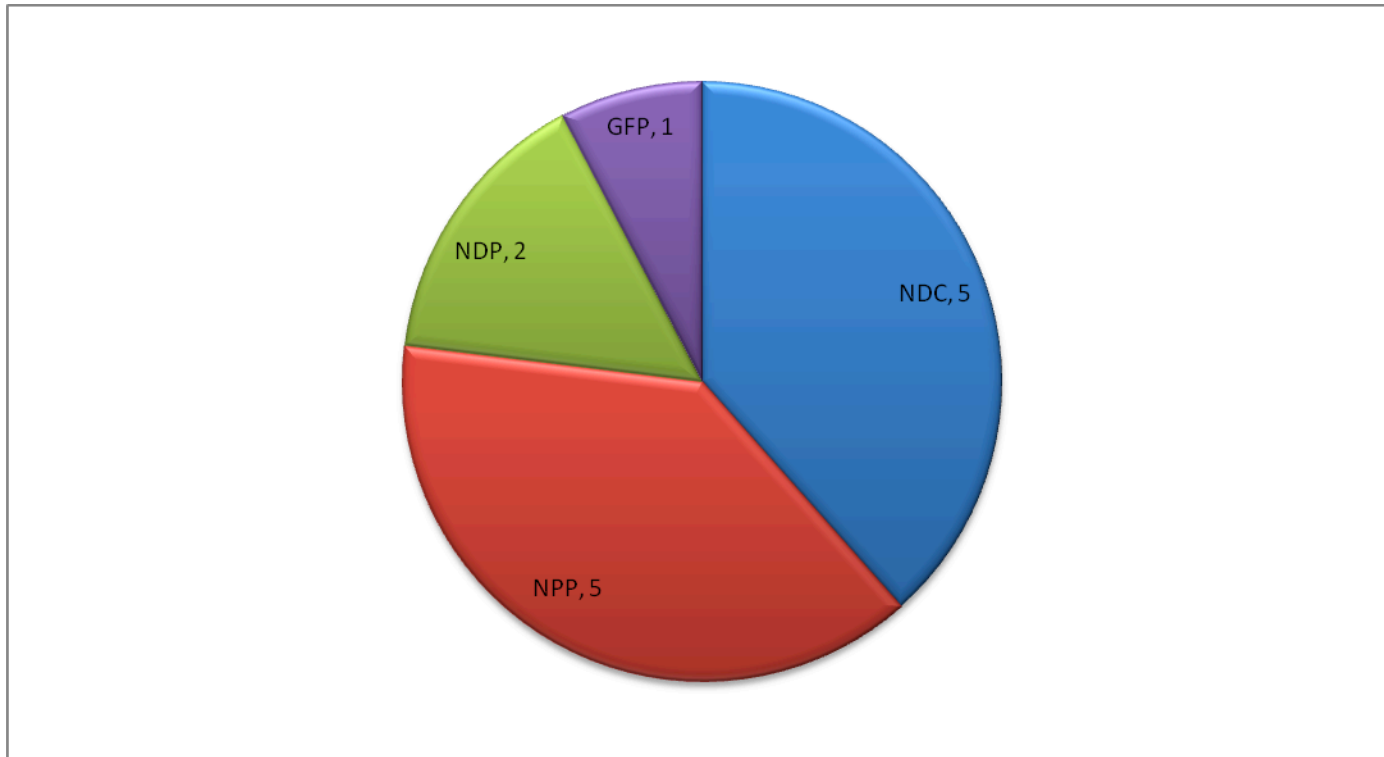
Figure 1: Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded



2.3 Political Party/ Group Affiliation of Individuals Who Used Indecent Expressions

Thirteen (13) out of the 14 indecent expressions recorded during the monitoring period were made by officials, supporters and affiliates of four political parties. One person, whose political affiliation was not established on the programme he featured on, made one indecent expression. The four political parties whose officials, supporters and affiliates were cited for using abusive expressions were: the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Party (NDP) and Ghana Freedom Party (GFP). The frequency of indecent expressions made by officials, supporters and affiliates of the four political parties are represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Frequency of Indecent Expressions Used by Political Party Affiliates



Note: The individual who used indecent expression but whose political party or group affiliation was unknown is not included in this graph

Categories of Indecent Expressions Used by Political Party Affiliates

Officials, supporters and affiliates, of the NDC and the NPP were at par in the use of indecent expressions on radio during the month of September with 5 recorded incidents each. The NDC officials, supporters and affiliates dominated in the use of insulting and offensive comments while officials, supporters and affiliates of the NPP were dominant in the use of provocative comments. Table 1 below shows the specific categories of indecent expressions used by

officials, supporters and affiliates of each of the four political parties cited. Also captured is an expression made by an individual whose political party affiliation could not be established

Table 1: Specific Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded by Political Party Affiliates

| Category of Indecent Expression | Political Party Affiliation of Culprits | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | NDC | NPP | NDP | GFP | UNKNOWN | Total |
| Provocative Comments | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| Insulting and Offensive Comments | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Unsubstantiated Allegations | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Remarks Inciting Violence | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 5 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 14 |

2.4 Specific Expressions Used

In the list below, individuals who used indecent expressions are placed under the categories of indecent expressions they made. The radio stations on which they used those expressions and the dates on which the expressions were made have also been indicated.

PROVOCATIVE COMMENTS

1. George Lawson, Deputy General Secretary of the NDC in a phone interview – on September 2, 2016 during the broadcast of *Adeɛ Akye Abia* on Okay FM.
2. Akua Donkor, flagbearer of Ghana Freedom Party (GFP) – during the broadcast of *Ghana Montie* on Neat FM on September 6, 2016.

3. Kennedy Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin-North in a studio discussion – on September 27, 2016 during the broadcast of *Ekosii Sen* on Asempa FM.
4. Uncle Ebo of the NPP in a studio discussion – **two (2)** on Happy FM during the broadcast of *Democracy* on September 8, 2016.
5. Mustapha Salam, Deputy National Youth Organizer of the NPP in a studio discussion – on September 9, 2016 during the broadcast of *Yepe Abu* on Happy FM.
6. Ernest Owusu Bempah, Communications Director of the NDP and host of *Democracy* - on Happy FM on September 15, 2016.

INSULTING AND OFFENSIVE COMMENTS

1. Kwaku Boahen, Deputy Communication Officer of the NDC, in a studio discussion - on September 24, 2016 during the broadcast of *Kukurantumi* on Nhyira FM.
2. George Lawson, Deputy General Secretary of the NDC in a phone interview - **three (3)** on September 13, 2016 during the broadcast of *Ade3 Akye Abia* on Okay FM.
3. Ernest Owusu-Bempah, Communications Director of the NDP and host of *Democracy* – on Happy FM aired on September 15, 2016.

UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS

1. George Boateng, in a studio discussion on Oman FM (affiliation unknown) – during the broadcast of *Boiling Point* on September 1, 2016.

INCITING VIOLENCE

1. Joe Donkor of the NPP in a studio discussion – on September 5, 2016 during the broadcast of *Democracy* on Happy FM.

As a policy, the MFWA does not publish the indecent expressions people make since it amounts to rebroadcasting those remarks. The specific expressions made by people cited in our reports are, however, available at the MFWA for verification by those cited.

2.5 Radio Stations and Incidents of Indecent Expressions

Indecent expressions were recorded on six out of the 60 radio stations monitored over the one-month period (September 1-30, 2016). Accra-based Happy FM recorded close to half (6) of the indecent expressions recorded, representing 43 percent. The six indecent expressions were predominantly provocative comments. Accra-based Okay FM followed with 4 indecent expressions. Table 2 below provides details of the incidents and categories of indecent expressions recorded on each of the six radio stations cited for indecent expressions.

Table 2: Frequency and Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded on Radio Stations

| Radio Stations | Categories of Indecent Expressions | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| | Insulting & Offensive Comments | Provocative Remarks | Unsubstantiated Allegations | Remarks Inciting Violence | Total |
| Happy FM | 1 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Okay FM | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Oman FM | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Asempa FM | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Neat FM | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Nhyira FM | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 5 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 14 |

For the one-month period under review, one individual was particularly abusive – George Lawson, Deputy General Secretary of the NDC. George Lawson was cited for making one provocative comment and three insulting and offensive comments during the monitoring period.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

For the month of September, the total number of indecent expressions recorded during the period (14), shows a reduction in the number of incidents of indecent expressions on radio as compared to the preceding month (August) which recorded 39 incidents of indecent expressions. This represents a 64 percent reduction in the use of indecent campaign language on radio over the two month period.

Though a significant development, the findings shows that political communication ahead of the December polls is still characterised by the use of abusive expressions. Such abusive remarks have the potential to provoke or incite others to anger and/or violence and must, therefore, be avoided in all forms of political discourse on radio in order to avert any form of elections related violence before, during and after the 2016 elections.

The MFWA therefore urges radio hosts and presenters in the country to play their gatekeeping role professionally and moderate their programmes to ensure that such expressions are not tolerated on their shows. We also call on all

political parties to continuously engage their communicators to focus on issues - based discussions and desist from the use of abusive expressions