



**REPORT ON INDECENT
CAMPAIGN LANGUAGE IN
NEWSPAPERS**

**FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD
NOVEMBER 1-15, 2016**

1.0 Introduction

As Ghana's 2016 elections draws closer, the media remain the biggest platform for the propagation of campaign messages by contesting political parties and candidates who are seeking the mandate of the electorate.

The media are generally expected to be objective and professional in the discharge of their duties as watchdogs and sources of information for the electorate. However, some media owners, editors and reporters tend to be partisan and in the process, they sometimes orchestrate, produce or allow to be produced in their media, offensive, provocative, unsubstantiated allegations and other forms of content that do not bode well for democratic discourse and the peace of the country during electioneering periods.

In response to and as a way of contributing to promote professional standards in the media while reducing incidents of abusive campaign language in the media, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has been monitoring and reporting on the use of indecent campaign language in the lead up to the 2016 polls. So far, the campaign language monitoring by the MFWA has been limited to monitoring of radio stations. The monitoring project has been highly successful in reducing abusive campaign language on radio stations across the country.

In order to expand the project's scope, the MFWA started monitoring and content-analysing the content of 15 selected newspapers to track and spotlight abusive campaign content in those newspapers. The inclusion of newspapers in the monitoring is important because newspapers in Ghana are still a major source of information and set the agenda for almost all the major discussions on radio in the morning.

The 15 newspapers that are being monitored include the two main state-owned ones (*Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times*) and 13 major private newspapers some of which are widely known or perceived to be supportive of the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) or the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC). The following are the private newspapers that are being monitored:

- *Daily Guide*
- *Daily Democrat*
- *The Daily Statesman*
- *The New Crusading Guide*
- *The Chronicle*
- *The Enquirer*
- *The Daily Dispatch*
- *The Ghanaian Lens*
- *Daily Post*
- *Today*
- *Daily Searchlight*
- *Ghana Palaver*
- *The Independent*

1.1 Methodology

A content analysis instrument and coding sheet was developed guided by the already existing stakeholder-validated instrument for the language monitoring on radio. Contextual modifications were made to reflect the differences in radio and newspaper content and presentation. Project staff were recruited and trained based on the content analysis instrument and coding sheet to content-analyse stories in the 15 selected newspapers to identify any abusive/indecent words, phrases, sentences or images in stories published by the selected newspapers.

The objective of this component of the project is to examine indecent expressions in newspapers, both state-owned and private. This report, therefore, covers findings from data monitored, collated and analysed from November 1 to 15, 2016.

2.0 General Findings

A total of 1,145 stories were monitored and analysed over a two week period in two state-owned newspapers and thirteen private newspapers. Out of these, 12 indecent expressions were recorded. These expressions fell under two categories: provocative comments and unsubstantiated allegations. Indecent expressions were recorded in four private newspapers (The Ghanaian Lens, Daily Democrat, The Enquirer and The Daily Statesman) out of the 15 newspaper outlets monitored. The Ghanaian Lens, a newspaper perceived to be pro-NDC, topped the list with 7 incidents of all indecent expressions recorded. The NPP had the highest number of attacks while the NDP and the NDC had the least.

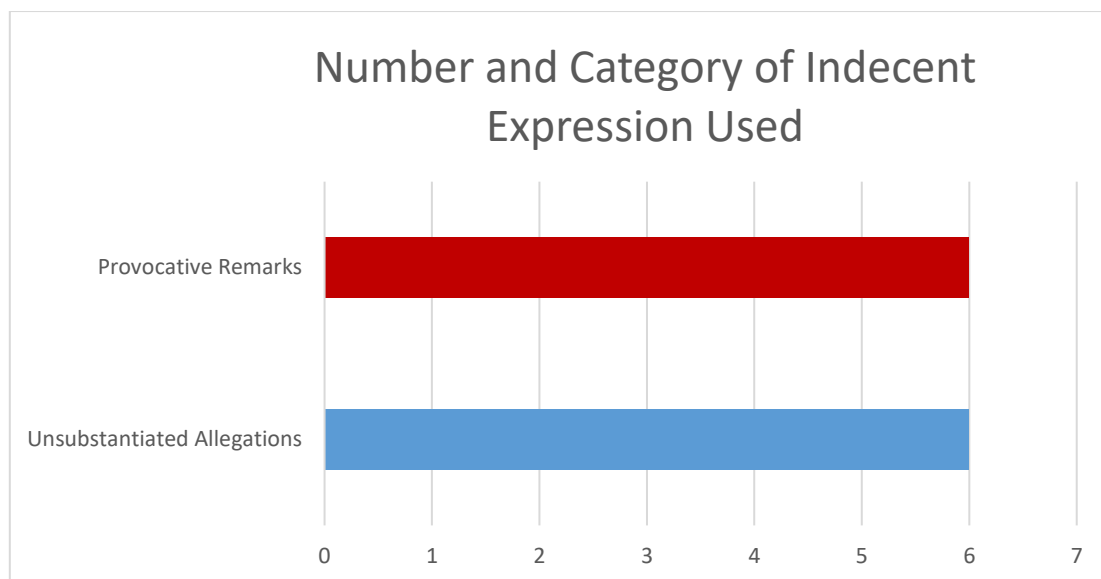
2.1 Specific Findings

The 15 newspaper outlets monitored generated a total of 1,145 political and election-related stories over the monitoring period. The distribution of stories by the 15 newspapers are presented below:

Newspaper	Number of Stories	Percentage
Daily Graphic	139	(12.1%)
The Ghanaian Times	79	(6.9%)
Daily Guide	129	(11.3%)
Daily Democrat	44	(3.8%)
The Daily Statesman	141	(12.3%)
The New Crusading Guide	66	(5.8%)
The Chronicle	76	(6.6%)
The Enquirer	69	(6.0%)
The Daily Dispatch	56	(4.9%)
The Ghanaian Lens	112	(9.8%)
Daily Post	82	(7.2%)
Today	75	(6.5%)
Daily Searchlight	58	(5.1%)
Ghana Palaver	17	(1.5%)
The Independent	2	(0.2%)

2.2 Indecent Expressions Recorded

The 12 indecent expressions recorded during the monitoring period were evenly distributed between two categories of expressions: provocative comments (6) and unsubstantiated allegations (6).



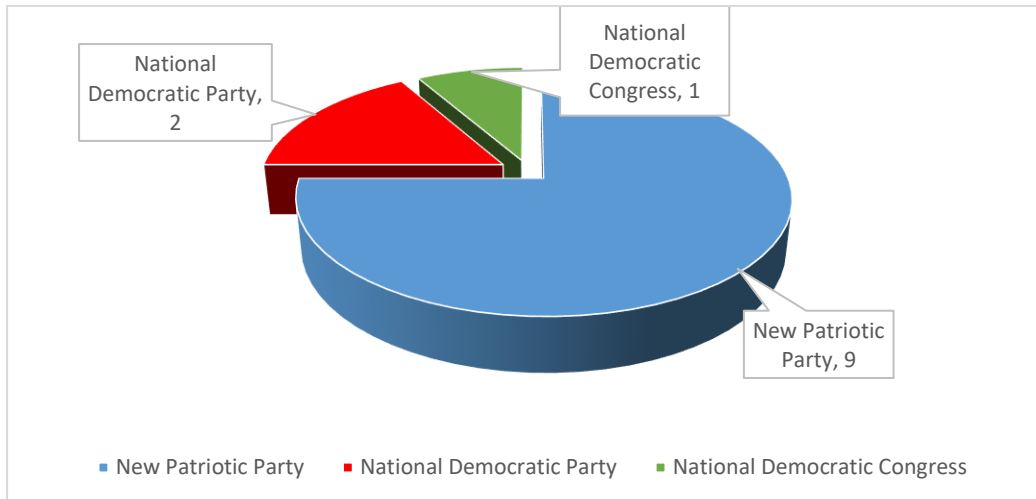
2.3 Newspapers and Incidents of Indecent Expressions

Indecent expressions were recorded in four (4) out of the 15 newspaper outlets monitored. The Ghanaian Lens recorded the highest use of indecent expressions (7) in their stories. The 7 indecent expressions were predominantly provocative comments (6), followed by one unsubstantiated allegations. The second highest number of indecent expressions (3) was recorded in the Daily Democrat, all of which were categorised as unsubstantiated allegations. The Enquirer and the Daily Statesman both recorded an incident each.

Newspaper	Type of expression used		
	Provocative Remarks	Unsubstantiated Allegations	Total
Daily Graphic	0	0	0
The Ghanaian Times	0	0	0
Daily Guide	0	0	0
Daily Democrat	0	3	3
The Daily Statesman	0	1	1
The New Crusading Guide	0	0	0
The Chronicle	0	0	0
The Enquirer	0	1	0
The Daily Dispatch	0	0	0
The Ghanaian Lens	6	1	8
Daily Post	0	0	0
Today	0	0	0
Daily Searchlight	0	0	0
Ghana Palaver	0	0	0
The Independent	0	0	0
Total	6	6	12

2.4 Targets of Indecent Expressions

The NPP and its functionaries were the target of 9 of the indecent expressions recorded in three newspapers, namely the Ghanaian Lens, the Daily Democrat and the Enquirer. Similarly, functionaries of the NDP were attacked twice in The Ghanaian Lens, while those of the NDC were the target of one indecent expression in The Daily Statesman. The figure below shows the breakdown of the targets of indecent expressions recorded.



2.5 Specific Expressions Used

Below are the particular expressions coded as being abusive/indecent and the newspapers these expressions were published in. Also provided are the headlines, dates, by-lines, and page numbers of stories that carried abusive expressions. These details are provided in order to address the peculiarities of newspaper monitoring and facilitate the verification of findings.

Newspaper: The Daily Statesman

Story Type: Letter

Headline: Nana Konadu, Dr Nduom and Dr Mahama were EC's target

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 8, 2016; Kwabena Owusu-Aduomi; Page 7

Context: The writer discusses the EC's disqualification of some presidential aspirants and the upcoming general elections.

Expression(s): "...KINDLY allow me some space in your popular newspaper to express my views on the recent disqualification meted out to some presidential candidates by the Electoral Commission. I can say with utmost certainty that the plan was premeditated by the EC under the DICTATES of the NDC to be executed in the "LAST HOUR." - **(Unsubstantiated allegation)**

Newspaper: The Ghanaian Lens

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings is an expired commodity

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 14, 2016; No By-line; Page 3

Context: The writer tries to give an insight into the personality of the former first lady as well as some of the things she has allegedly done.

Expression 1: "...has turned into a commode buzzing fly just to make empty political noise to expose her selfishness, ignorance, mediocrity, bumptiousness, greed, hatred and disrespect for others' - **(Provocative remark)**

Expression 2: "she is simply toxic and no sane person wants to mingle with her". - **(Provocative remark)**

Newspaper: The Enquirer

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: The NDC hat trick and a Guinness book of records

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 14, 2016; Abdullah Abdullah; Page 2

Context: The story attempts to highlight some things the NPP government allegedly did when they were in power.

Expression: "they orchestrated the killing of the Yana and cleverly hid all evidence".

- **(Unsubstantiated allegation)**

Newspaper: The Ghanaian Lens

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: Akufo Addo where is your sister Mamaa Addo

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 11, 2016; Margaret Jackson; Page 3

Context: The story claims that Akufo-Addo is known to be violent and is responsible for some 'bloody' undertakings and yet he manages to go unpunished.

Expression 1: "Akufo Addo who in his Legon days impregnated one Virginia Hersey and denied responsibility leading to her expulsion" - **(Unsubstantiated allegations)**

Expression 2: "Knocked down and killed an elderly person on his way from Legon campus". - **(Unsubstantiated allegation)**

Expression 3: "His first marriage to a Nigerian woman did not end on a positive note as severe beatings and maltreatment by Akufo Addo compelled the family of Remi to whisk her away". - **(Unsubstantiated allegation)**

Newspaper: The Ghanaian Lens

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: Does the NPP have a manifesto to propagate?

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 2, 2016; Dr. Michael J.K Bukor; Page 3

Context: The story was a reaction to comments made by some leading members of the NPP on their campaign trails.

Expression(s): "Now here comes Samira Bawumia too, a nonentity carrying a moral baggage to be despised for...have we not heard of her infidelity to the master liar ". - **(Provocative remark)**

Newspaper: The Ghanaian Lens

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: Vote for Akufo Addo and you will get sleeping Buhari

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 7, 2016; Margaret Jackson; Page 3

Context: The story tries to compare Nana Akufo-Addo to President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria, and discusses the people Nana Akufo-Addo has surrounded himself with.

Expression 1: "He (Akufo-Addo) has surrounded himself with drug barons" - **(Unsubstantiated allegation)**

Expression 2: "The nonentity Gabby Okyere Darko whose sole aim is to come and loot Ghana..." - **(Provocative remark)**

Newspaper: The Ghanaian Lens

Story Type: Commentary

Headline: Who Ordained Akufo Addo

Date, By-line, Page Number: November 9, 2016; Margaret Jackson; Page 3

Context: The story discusses some predictions of victory for Nana Akufo-Addo and also raises some allegations about him that might hinder him from becoming the president.

Expression 1: "Indeed if there are any demonic forces that will stop Akufo-Addo from achieving his dream, it's none other than the demon of pettiness, the demon of arrogance, the demon of being funded by drug money, the demon of divisiveness, the demon of blood money, the demon of belittling others, the demon of being worshipped...I will even add the demon of Akufo Addo". - **(Provocative remark)**

Expression 2: "My God will never ordain a man with trails of blood on his hands to lead a peace-loving country like Ghana". - **(Provocative remark)**

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The 12 indecent expressions recorded in 4 of the 15 newspapers monitored show that abusive language often used on radio are also found in newspapers. Such abusive language has the potential to incite anger and/or violence. Also, considering the influence newspapers hold in public deliberations, such unfortunate practices serve to only worsen the political polarisation in the country.

The MFWA therefore urges newspaper outlets, their journalists and editors to ensure that their reportage, especially on matters of political campaigning is devoid of any abusive and indecent content.