

MONITORING OF INDECENT LANGUAGE ON RADIO

FINDINGS FOR THE PERIOD JUNE 1-14, 2020



with funding support from:



1.0 Introduction/ Background

Presidential and parliamentary elections campaigning in Ghana are often characterised by an escalation in the use of hate speech, inflammatory remarks, unsubstantiated allegations and vitriolic attacks, among other indecent expressions. In 2012 and 2016, for instance, the Media Foundation for West Africa's (MFWA's) monitoring of indecent campaign language use on radio showed the penchant for the use of insults, inflammatory and provocative expressions, and other vitriolic attacks. The use of such expressions often diverts focus from the discussion of issues to personality attacks and also contributes to heightening tensions, before, during and even after elections.

In Ghana, radio remains the main source of news, education and entertainment for the masses. During elections in particular, radio gains momentous dominance as they are heavily depended upon by the electorate for information on the various political parties, their vision, policies, ideologies and programmes for the masses. On their part, political parties, their activists, affiliates and assigns in reaching out to the masses with their messages, often resort to the use of radio as it remains the most effective citizens' engagement platform in Ghana.

Quite regrettably though, such engagements have often been characterised by the high preference for intemperate, indecent and unethical language often manifested in character assassinations, unsubstantiated allegations, unwarranted provocation and outbursts or fury, among others. The situation is no different in 2020. Even in the midst of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, public discourse around the disease and other current affairs and political debates particularly on radio continue to be characterised by indecent expressions. Unfortunately, a number of the radio stations allow the political parties and their representatives to abuse the airwaves with little or no restraint from programme hosts and presenters. As evidenced in some countries, such practices sometimes instigate electoral violence during electioneering periods.

Based on experiences and lessons learnt from earlier campaign language monitoring projects in 2012 and 2016, the MFWA is monitoring indecent language on radio during the 2020 electioneering period to contribute to issues-based, decent language campaigning and peaceful elections. The project, *Promoting Decent Language and Issues-based Campaigning for Peaceful Elections in Ghana in 2020*, is being implemented with funding support from the STAR-Ghana Foundation and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA).

1.1 Methodology

The project involves the daily monitoring of expressions used by politicians and other actors who feature on radio programmes such as news bulletins, political discussions and current affairs. It also involves assessing and reporting how presenters or hosts of selected programmes on radio stations handle their programmes and whether or not they tolerate the use of hate speech and other indecent language on their programmes.

This report covers monitoring of 20 radio stations in Ghana. Below are the 20 radio stations that are currently being monitored under the current phase of the project.

Table1: List of Radio Stations being Monitored under the Current Phase

Region	Radio Stations
Greater Accra Region	Top FM
	Rainbow Radio
	Oman FM
	Power FM
	Class FM
	Peace FM
	Happy FM
	Okay FM
	Accra FM
	Ahutor FM
Ashanti Region	Hello FM
	Ash FM
	Kessben FM
	Obuoba FM
Northern Region	Diamond FM
	Radio Justice
Bono Region	Tain FM
	Royal FM
North East Region	Eagle FM
Bono East	Classic FM

The monitoring is done based on a validated [monitoring instrument](#). Twenty language monitors have been recruited (one monitor per station) and trained on the use of the monitoring instrument. Each monitor is assigned a digital recorder for purposes of recording the programmes they monitor. Monitors send daily reports to the MFWA which are analysed by a team of programme staff and researchers for a consolidated report to be produced.

This first campaign language monitoring report for the 2020 electioneering period presents findings from the daily monitoring of selected programmes on the 20 radio stations above. It specifically cites the number of indecent expressions recorded, the categories of indecent expressions used, names of individuals who made indecent remarks and their political party affiliation, as well as the radio stations on which the expressions were made. The report ends with some recommendations for relevant stakeholders.

2.0 Findings

The findings for this report cover monitoring from June 1-14, 2020. During the period, a total of 597 programmes were monitored on the 20 target radio stations. The programmes monitored were news bulletins, current affairs and political discussion programmes aired in the morning, afternoon and evening. The main subjects that dominated the news and programmes monitored included the Electoral Commission's decision to compile a new Voters' Register, COVID-19 and general public health, infrastructure, education and constitutional matters.

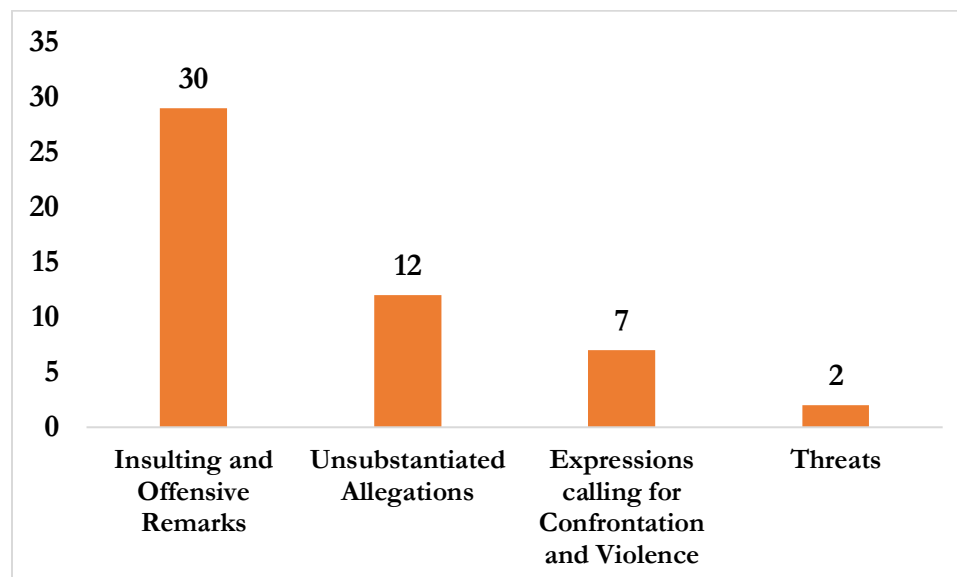
The two-week monitoring of the 20 radio stations captured a total of 51 indecent expressions. Many of the expressions were recorded on Akan-speaking political discussion and current affairs programmes where political party representatives and affiliates were invited for discussions.

Majority of the programmes monitored were hosted by male moderators (87%). Almost all (98%) of those who featured on programmes on the 20 radio stations as discussants, interviewees and callers were males.

2.1 Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded

The 51 indecent expressions that were recorded were made up of insulting and offensive comments; unsubstantiated allegations; expressions calling for confrontation and violence; and threats. Figure 1 below indicates the frequency of the four different types of indecent expressions that were recorded.

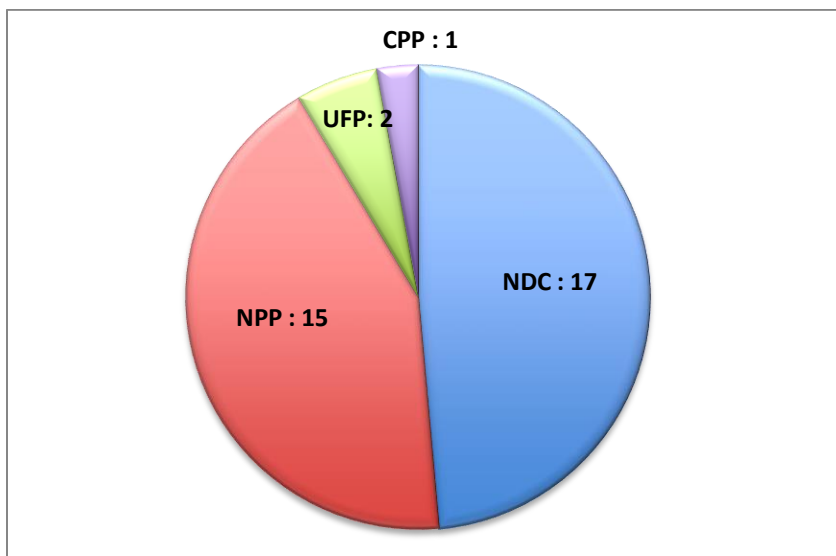
Figure 1: Frequency of Indecent Expressions Recorded



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

Altogether, 22 individuals made the 51 indecent expressions. These individuals featured on the programmes as hosts, discussants, interviewees and texters. The political party affiliation of seven of those who made abusive remarks could not be established. This is mainly because only persons who represent or are introduced as members of a political party are coded against their respective political parties. The remaining 15 persons who used indecent expressions were identified as representatives or affiliates of four political parties: National Democratic Congress (NDC), New Patriotic Party (NPP), United Front Party (UFP) and Convention People's Party (CPP). Together, the 15 political party affiliates made 35 (69%) of the 51 indecent expressions recorded over the monitoring period. Figure 2 below presents the total number of indecent expressions recorded by affiliates of the 4 political parties:

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



Note: Individuals who used indecent expressions but their political party or group affiliation was not mentioned are not included in Figure 2 above

2.3 Categories of Indecent Expressions Used by Political Party Affiliates

As presented in Figure 2 above, representatives and affiliates of the NDC recorded the highest number (17) of indecent expressions followed by representatives and affiliates of the NPP (15).

Table 2 below presents the categories of indecent expressions made by affiliates of the four political parties. Included in Table 2 are the expressions made by persons whose political affiliation could not be established.

Table 2: Specific Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded by Political Party Affiliates

Political Affiliation of Perpetrators	Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded				
	Insulting & Offensive Remarks	Unsubstantiated Allegations	Expressions calling for Confrontation & Violence	Threats	Total
NDC	7	7	3	0	17
NPP	8	3	2	2	15
UFP	0	1	1	0	2
CPP	1	0	0	0	1
Not Established	14	1	1	0	16
Total	30	12	7	2	51

2.4 Specific Expressions Used

Below are the names of the individuals who made the 51 indecent expressions under the various types of indecent expressions, the radio stations and the dates on which the expressions were made.

Insulting and Offensive Comments

1. Brogya Gyamfi, the Ashanti Regional Organizer of the NDC – on Happy FM's *Epa Hoa Daben* programme aired on June 2, 2020.
2. Kwabena Mintah Akando, NDC MP for Juaboso Constituency – on Accra FM's *Ghana Yensom* programme aired on June 2, 2020.
3. Yaw Amofa, host of Oman FM's morning programme (political party affiliation not mentioned) – **two (2)** during Oman FM's National Agenda programme aired on June 4, 2020.
4. Isaac Gyan (also known as Kantinka) of the CPP – during Classic FM's *Ka Na Wu* aired on June 4, 2020.
5. Oheneba Boamah Bennie (political affiliation not mentioned) – **three (3)** during Power FM's *Inside Politics* programme (What is trending segment), aired on June 5, 2020.
6. Mugabe Maase (political affiliation not mentioned), host of Power FM's *Inside Politics* programme – during the June 5, 2020 edition of the programme.
7. Elvis Afriyie Ankrah, Director of Elections of the NDC – **two (2)** during Eagle FM's *IPRAVR* programme aired on June 6, 2020.
8. Fatimatu Abubakar, Deputy Communication Director at the Presidency (NPP) – during Oman FM's Boiling Point aired on June 4, 2020.

9. Yaw Adomako Baafi, Former Director of Communications of the NPP – during Oman FM's National Agenda programme aired on June 5, 2020.
10. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin Central – **two (2)** during Oman FM's National Agenda programme aired on June 8, 2020.
11. Collins O. Amankwah, NPP MP for Manhyia North – during Rainbow Radio's Frontline programme aired on June 8, 2020.
12. Listowel Nana Kusi Poku, Executive Secretary of Good Governance Advocacy Ghana (political affiliation not mentioned) – **two (2)** during Ahotor FM's *Adekye Mu Nsem* programme aired on June 10, 2020.
13. Mugabe Maase, host of Power FM's *Inside Politics* programme (political affiliation not mentioned) – **two (2)** during the June 11, 2020 edition of the programme.
14. Don Dallas Williams, Eastern Regional Communication Director of the NDC – **three (3)** during Obuoba FM's *Obuoba Kasa* programme, aired on June 9, 2020.
15. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin Central – **three (3)** during Oman FM's *Boiling Point* programme aired on June 11, 2020. The programme was also broadcasted live on Ashh FM.
16. Kwabena Kwakye (political affiliation not mentioned), host of the Boiling Point programme on Oman FM – during the newspaper review segment on Oman FM's *National Agenda* programme aired on June 5, 2020.
17. Listowel Nana Kusi Poku Executive Secretary of Good Governance Advocacy Ghana (political affiliation not mentioned) – **three (3)** during Power FM's *Inside Politics* programme aired on June 12, 2020.

Unsubstantiated Allegations

1. Nana Agyenim Boateng, Flagbearer of UFP (a member of IPRAN¹) – during an interview on *Top FM's Enne Ghana* programme aired on June 1, 2020.
2. Don Dallas Williams, Eastern Regional Communication Director of the NDC – on *Obuoba FM's Obuoba Kasa* programme aired on June 3, 2020.
3. Dr. Grace Ayensu Danquah, an NDC parliamentary candidate for the Essikado-Ketan Constituency – during *Power FM's Inside Politics* programme aired on June 5, 2020.
4. Elvis Afriyie Ankrah, Director of Elections of the NDC – on Eagle FM's *IPRAVR* programme on June 6, 2020.
5. Professor Kwame Agyenim Boateng of the Faculty of Law, Governance and International Relations, and director of quality assurance at Kings University College (political affiliation not mentioned) – in an interview on Peace FM's Mid-day News on June 2, 2020. The news was also broadcasted live on Okay FM and Hello FM.
6. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin Central – **two (2)** during Oman FM's National Agenda programme aired on June 8, 2020.

¹ Inter-Party Resistance Against New Voter Register of Ghana

7. Nana Boakye, National Youth Organizer of the NPP – during Okay FM’s *Egyaso Gyaso* programme aired on June 8, 2020.
8. Don Dallas Williams, Eastern Regional Communication Director of the NDC – on Obuoba FM’s *Obuoba Kasa* programme aired on June 9, 2020.
9. Sammy Gyamfi, National Communications Officer of the NDC – in an interview on Okay FM’s Morning Show, *Ade3 Akye Abia*, aired on June 9, 2020.
10. Nyame Gregory Emmanuel, Constituency Youth Organizer of the NDC (Tain District) - during Tain FM’s Morning Political Discussion programme aired on June 11, 2020.
11. A member of the NDC communication team in Tain, only introduced as Akisko – during Tain FM’s Morning Political Discussion programme aired on June 9, 2020.

Expressions calling for Confrontation and Violence

1. Nana Agyenim Boateng, Flagbearer of UFP (a member of IPRAN) – in an interview on Top FM’s *Enne Ghana* programme aired on June 1, 2020.
2. Brogya Gyamfi, Ashanti Regional Organizer of the NDC – **two (2)** on Happy FM’s *Epa Hoa Daben* programme aired on June 2, 2020.
3. Don Dallas Williams, Eastern Regional Communication Director of the NDC – on Obuoba FM’s *Obuoba Kasa* programme aired on June 3, 2020.
4. Abdulai Tahiru Yampasiya, the host of Eagle FM’s Eagle Breakfast read a text message from one King Gabriel (political affiliation not mentioned) – during Eagle FM’s Eagle Breakfast show aired on June 8, 2020.
5. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin Central – **two (2)** on Oman FM’s National Agenda programme aired on June 8, 2020.

Threats

1. Kennedy Ohene Agyapong, NPP MP for Assin Central – **two (2)** on Oman FM’s National Agenda programme aired on June 8, 2020.

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

Out of the 20 radio stations monitored, 13 recorded indecent expressions. Accra-based Oman FM recorded the highest number (16) of indecent expressions on two programmes of the station, National Agenda (11) and Boiling Point (5). Power FM, also based in Accra, followed with 10 indecent expressions all of which were recorded on its Inside Politics programme. Nkawkaw-based Obuoba FM followed with six indecent expressions. The frequency of indecent expressions recorded on all the 13 radio stations are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Radio Stations that Recorded Indecent Expressions

Radio Station	Frequency of Indecent Expressions
Oman FM	16
Power FM	10
Obuoba FM	6
Eagle FM	4
Happy FM	3
Ahotor FM	2
Okay FM	2
Tain FM	2
Top FM	2
Peace FM	1
Accra FM	1
Classic FM	1
Rainbow	1
Total	51

Note: The indecent expression recorded on Accra-based Peace FM was also recorded on Okay FM which picks news feed from the former.

Assessment of Moderation of Programmes by Hosts

One significant variable the monitoring sought to find out was the conduct of hosts or moderators and how they handled the respective programmes they moderated, especially when indecent expressions were used. The monitoring found that whereas some of the moderators were firm in insisting on focusing on issues throughout discussions or interview sessions, others allowed indecent expressions on their platforms without any restraint. In some instances, some of the moderators did not even ask the culprits of indecent expressions to apologise or retract.

Some programme hosts were themselves found to be culprits in the use of abusive expressions. Specifically, Mugabe Maase, host of Accra-based Power FM's afternoon current affairs programme, Inside Politics, made three insulting comments while Yaw Amofa, the host of Oman FM's morning discussion programme, National Agenda, made two insulting comments. In one instance, the host of Eagle FM's Eagle Breakfast show, Abdulai Tahiru Yampasiya, read a text message that was calling for confrontation sent in by a listener.

The monitoring also noted the repeated rebroadcast of some problematic sound bites on some radio stations. A series of sound bites containing indecent expressions ranging from threats to unsubstantiated allegations, insulting and offensive remarks, and expressions calling for confrontation and violence was replayed before and/or during news bulletins and other programmes for days on some of the radio stations. The following political shows were particularly noted for playing sound bites at the start of or during their programmes: Power FM's Inside Politics and Oman FM's Boiling Point.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings from the two-week (June 1-14, 2020) monitoring of indecent language on the 20 radio stations have confirmed that the use of abusive language is quite prevalent – having recorded 51 indecent expressions on 20 stations in 14 days. The findings also show that officials, representatives and affiliates of the opposition NDC and the ruling NPP dominate in the use of indecent expressions on radio.

Also notable among the findings is the way in which some moderators handled some of the programmes coupled with the way some of them conducted themselves. It is worrying that some moderators could not demand and insist that those who featured on their programmes and made derogatory and other indecent expressions retract and/or apologise. More worrying is the fact that some of the moderators were captured making abusive expressions themselves.

Following the findings, the MFWA makes the following recommendations:

- Leaders of the various political parties should encourage their representatives and affiliates to focus on issues-based discussions and desist from using indecent or abusive expressions.
- Radio stations, especially presenters/ moderators should handle their programmes with professionalism by desisting from using indecent expressions and insisting on the use of decent expressions by persons who appear on their programmes. Moderators of the various programmes should do well to put in place ground rules for their respective programmes and enforce them.
- The National Media Commission (NMC), the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) are encouraged to use these findings and subsequent ones to inform remedial actions and processes.
- The electorates are encouraged to follow and consider the findings from the monitoring reports to know which political parties are discussing the issues that are of concern to them and those attacking personalities so as to help inform and guide their voting decisions.



Media Foundation for West Africa

32 Otele Avenue, East Legon,

Telephone: +233 (0) 302 555 327

Twitter: @TheMFWA

Facebook: Media Foundation for West Africa

info@mfwawest.org

www.mfwawest.org



@themfwa



@TheMFWA



www.mfwawest.org