

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MEDIA DISCOURSE DECLINES FURTHER: REPORT BY MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA& FOSDA

1.0 Introduction and Background

Gender relations are changing across the globe as a result of the pivotal role women play in society and in governance processes in general. Gender-inclusiveness has, thus, become an important indicator of good governance in many democratic societies. Moreover, the inclusion of women in decision-making processes is considered critical for the overall empowerment of women.

Even though Ghana has signed and ratified several UN Charters and Conventions which emphasise women's political participation and representation at all levels of power, women's participation and involvement in governance processes remain quite low. Typical of this is the fact that in Ghana's 275-member Parliament, there are only 29 (11%) women Parliamentarians; and out of 72 Ministers of State, including Deputy and Regional Ministers, only 17 (24%) are women. And this is despite the fact that about 51 percent of Ghana's population are women.

To help improve this gender imbalance, several interventions have been deployed by a number of governmental and non-governmental organisations to boost the involvement of women in all sectors of society, especially in politics and governance processes. One indispensable stakeholder that is often not maximised in these efforts is the media. As agenda setters, the media are able to shape public opinions and thoughts about all issues (including the involvement of women in national discourse). The media are, therefore, better placed to contribute to highlighting women; building their public profiles and confidence levels; and improving their political fortunes by giving them spaces on their networks. Unfortunately, women are not often featured in media discourse.

It is upon this premise that the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in collaboration with the Foundation for Security and Development in Africa (FOSDA) is carrying out Phase two of its "*Increasing women's voices and participation in public discourse in Ghana*" project. The project was initiated last year (2013) with funding support by IBIS in Ghana. It is aimed at influencing gender policies and practices of media institutions so they can make deliberate efforts in including women in their programming. The project also seeks to

influence the gender policies of political parties in Ghana to increase the participation of women in their media/public communication engagements. As part of the project, a gender policy guideline was developed through several consultation meetings with political parties and media organisations across the country. The document which was launched in Accra by the Minister for Women Children and Social Protection – Nana Oye Lithur – is to guide and help political parties and media houses make a conscious effort to involve more women in media discussion programmes.

The project also involves the continuous monitoring of 24 selected radio stations to track and report on a monthly basis, the levels of involvement and participation of women in media programmes. The monitoring also seeks to track and report which media houses and political parties are consciously allowing more women on public discourse programmes and media engagements respectively. It is also aimed at generating evidence-based materials for further advocacy around women's empowerment.

The report below is the first of the 2014 monthly monitoring reports on the involvement and participation of women in media discourse in Ghana. It covers the findings of data gathered from programmes on the 24 radio stations being monitored across the country for the month of June 2014.

2.0 Methodology

The monitoring exercise involves 24 selected radio stations in eight out of the 10 regions of the country. The stations were purposively selected on the basis of ownership, regional balance, listenership/coverage. The exercise is being undertaken with the help of a monitoring instrument developed and validated by media and language experts at the start of the project last year. To ensure that the instrument is still relevant and reliable for the 2014 monitoring exercise, it was thoroughly reviewed in May 2014.

Subsequently, 24 individuals with requisite qualification were selected and trained on the monitoring instrument and its application. Each monitor has been provided with a recorder for daily recording and reporting of programmes being monitored. The monitoring will span a period of six months (June to December 2014).

3.0 General Findings

There is strong evidence from the data gathered that gender imbalance abounds in radio content. Altogether, 692 programmes were monitored on the

24 radio stations selected for the project. The programmes monitored were dominantly major news bulletins and current affairs discussion programmes. The data collated on the programmes showed that a total of 2,172 people featured on the programmes monitored as moderators/presenters, media personnel, and discussants, interviewees and callers. Out of the 2,172 individuals, only 17 percent (359) were females while the remaining 83 percent were males.

This finding shows a further decline in the level of women involved in news and discussion programmes on radio especially when it is compared to similar monitoring reports issued by the MFWA in [October](#), [November](#) & [December](#) of 2013. Even though the period under review is not same as the three months, trend analysis shows that the level of women's involvement and participation in media discourse has not improved. Table 1 below shows the overall trend:

Table 1: Trend Analysis of Women's Involvement/Participation in Radio Programmes

Reporting Month	Male	Female
October 2013	69%	31%
November 2013	75%	25%
December 2013	73%	27%
June 2014	83%	<u>17%</u>

From Table 1 above, the level of women's voices and participation in radio programming has dropped from 27 percent in December 2013 to 17 percent in June 2014; a rather disturbing 10 percent decline in the already poor situation.

3.2 Specific Findings

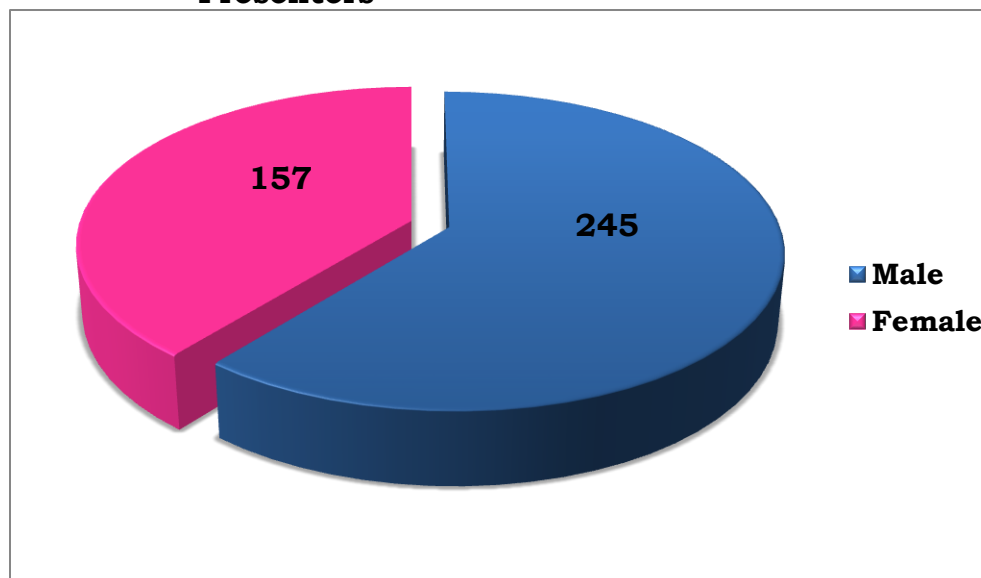
3.2.1 Gender, Media Programming and Content

The 692 programmes monitored featured a total of 2,172 people. Among the 2,172 were 432 moderators and presenters who worked with the radio stations monitored. The remaining 1,740 were individuals who featured on the programmes monitored as discussants (panellists, interviewees and callers).

Gender of Moderators/Presenters on Radio Programmes Monitored

There was gender disparity among the moderators/ presenters who featured on the programmes monitored. Male moderators/presenters dominated most of the programmes monitored (be it news bulletins or discussion programmes). Figure 1 below shows the level of imbalance between the male and female moderators/ presenters recorded:

Figure 1: Gender Disparity between Male & Female Moderators/ Presenters



The 157 females recorded in Figure 1 above were mostly news anchors. Only 13 of them were recorded hosting or moderating a discussion programme.

Accra-based *Radio Gold* and Hohoe-based *Lorlonyo FM* were the only radio stations among the 24 monitored that registered more female presenters than males during the monitoring period. Conversely, Bolga-based *Radio Gurune* and Nsawam-based *Fawe FM* registered the least number of female moderators/presenters on their programmes. Interestingly, *Radio Gurune* is owned by a woman and *FAWE FM* is owned by the Federation for African Women Education.

Gender, Sources/Attribution and Voices of Actuality

The dominance of males in media programming was not limited to moderators/presenters. It also reflected in the sources/attribution and voices of actuality used by the radio stations. Table 1 below presents details of the

gender disparity observed in the use of sources and actuality over the one-month period:

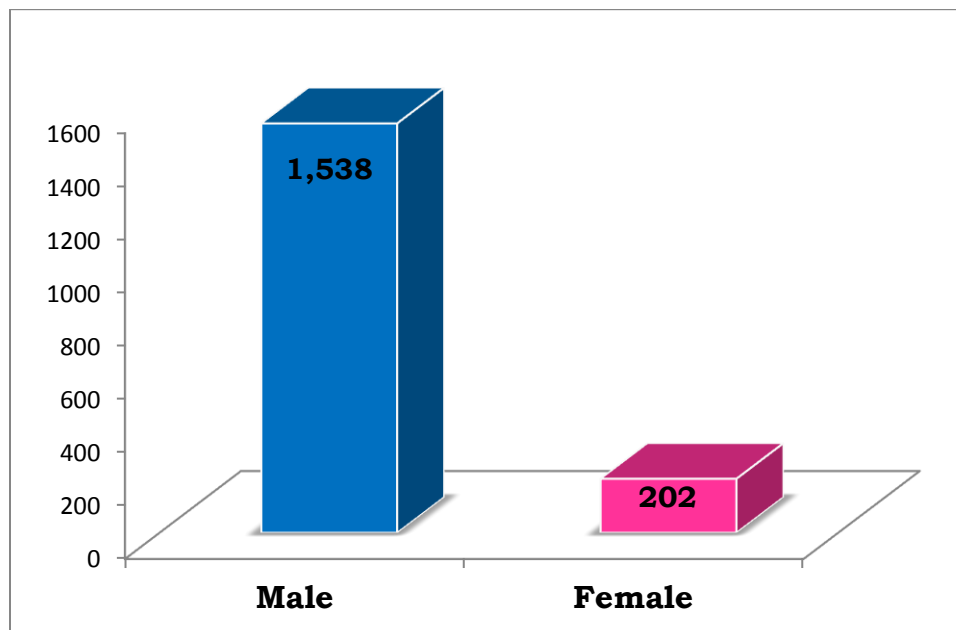
Table1: Gender of Sources/Attribution and Voices of Actuality Used

Gender	Sources/Attribution	Actuality
Male	289 (86%)	195 (68%)
Female	49 (14%)	93 (32%)
Total	338 (100%)	288 (100%)

3.2.2 Gender of Discussants on Radio Programmes Monitored

Male dominance in the media was also manifest in the male-to-female ratio of the discussants (including panellists, interviewees and callers) who featured on the programmes monitored. Out of a total of 1,740 discussants recorded, less than 15 percent of them were females. Figure 2 below depicts the wide gender disparity among the discussants on the programmes monitored:

Figure 2: Gender Disparity of Discussants on Radio Programmes



Gender and Political Party Affiliation

The political party affiliations of the discussants coded were not always disclosed by moderators/presenters. Therefore, out of the 1,740 discussants, who featured on all the programmes monitored, it was only 772 of them whose political affiliations were mentioned. The political party affiliation of the remaining 968 was not mentioned.

The 772 people were officials, supporters and affiliates of seven (7) political parties – New Patriotic Party (NPP), National Democratic Congress (NDC), Convention Peoples Party (CPP), People’s National Convention (PNC), Progressive People’s Party (PPP), National Democratic Party (NDP) and United Renaissance Party (URP). Analysis of the data showed that similar to the findings above, majority of these political affiliates were dominantly men with only a handful being women. Specifically, out of the 772 whose political affiliation was identified, 710 (92%) were males whereas females constituted less than 10 percent (62).

Even though the NPP recorded the highest number of affiliates, there were more NDC female affiliates on the programmes monitored than that of the NPP and the other five political parties. Table 1 below presents the details of these findings:

Table 3: Gender of Political Party Affiliates

Political Party Affiliation	Male	Female	Percentage Ratio of Male to Female
NPP	376	29	93% : 7%
NDC	251	32	89% : 11%
CPP	38	1	97% : 3%
PNC	25	0	100% : 0%
PPP	14	0	100% : 0%
NDP	5	0	100% : 0%
URP	1	0	100% : 0%
Total	710	62	100%

3.2.3 Treatment of Women and Gender-related Issues

Women were generally treated well on the radio stations monitored. Most of the moderators/ presenters were friendly and cooperative with the females who featured on their programmes. Similarly, the male discussants who participated in the programmes monitored were friendly and cooperative in dealing with the female participants. Even though a few incidence of hostility against women were recorded, there were no attacks or disparaging comment against women in general or any of the women who featured on the programmes monitored in particular.

It is worth pointing out however that one gender-stereotypical comment was recorded. The details are presented below:

“Women [have] the character of arrogance and insulting others ... I have always maintained that women are their own enemies.” This comment was made by a male discussant on the Morning Show of Tamale-based *North Star FM* which aired on June 2, 2014.

Gender-related issues hardly came up as topical issues for discussion. The few gender-related issues discussed were often overshadowed by other issues which dominated discussions on almost all the 24 stations with the most dominant being Political (181), Social (151), Educational (80), Crime (79) Economic (66), and Transport related issues. Altogether, the total number of gender-related issues recorded over the one-month period was 40. These few gender-related issues basically focused on:

- ✚ *Women and children’s health issues: 16*
- ✚ *Girl Child Rights/ Education: 7*
- ✚ *Abuse of Minor Girls: 7*
- ✚ *Women in Politics: 6*
- ✚ *Others (including women in prostitution; relationships; & gender mainstreaming):4*

3.2.4 Performance of Women on Radio Programmes Monitored

Two levels of assessments were undertaken – one for female moderators/presenters and another for female discussants. The performance of the female moderators/presenters was assessed based on how they handled issues, time allotment, control of panel, partisanship and their professional

conduct in managing their respective programmes. On the other hand, the performance of discussants was assessed on the basis of their experience, knowledge of issues, confidence and articulation of issues, and their ability to focus on issues under discussion.

Generally, most of the female moderators were very professional in handling their programmes or news items. Specifically, the female moderators/presenters were fair and unbiased in handling gender-related issues just like their male colleagues. They were also very good and firm in controlling their panellists or interviewees, and in allotting time for submissions by discussants irrespective of their gender. However, even though most of the female presenters were on top of issues as their male counterparts, a few did not exhibit much authority or knowledge of some of the issues tabled for discussion.

With regard to the women discussants and interviewees who featured on the programmes monitored, their overall performance was highly commendable. They were generally knowledgeable, articulate and very confident in their submissions. Of the 202 women discussants who featured on the programmes monitored, only four (4) were found to have performed below average.

Conclusion

As evident from the findings above, the voices and participation of women in public discourse programmes in the media is increasingly dwindling – be it in terms of media workers or discussants who participate in radio programmes.

Refreshing though is the finding that the few women participants in such public discourse programmes on radio have proven that they have the competence and expertise to do so. This certainly should be a good motivation for media managers and political parties to make the conscious effort to include women in their programming and communication engagements respectively. This requires the adoption of concrete policies rather than leaving it to the discretion of a programme manager, producer or party official.

Ghana committed herself to achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) in September, 2000. Attaining appreciable level of MDG 3 – *promoting gender equality and empowering women* – requires a concerted effort from government, media, political parties and civil society groups to ensure gender equity and representation at all levels of power.

It is therefore quite a positive development that the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) recorded relatively higher number of women participants in public discourse programmes on radio for the month of June, 2014. Many factors may have contributed to this, but it is hoped that the party will stay true to its manifesto promise of ensuring a “40% women’s representation in all public appointments and at the Party’s Conferences and Congresses.” ¹

The MFWA and FOSDA also call for political will among all political parties in instituting policies that provide for and ensure the active participation of women in their media and communication engagements. This will give women, who constitute 51 percent of Ghana’s population, the opportunity to contribute to public discussions and governance processes at all levels in the country.

¹ National Democratic Congress, 2012. 2012 Manifesto – Advancing The Better Ghana Agenda. Accessed from <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B4fn1Fz6J8K9WmZMMEhocjNNZEU/edit?pli=1>.