Ghana's 2024 Elections

Monitoring of Indecent Campaign Language on Radio

ON AIR

Findings for August 1-31, 2024

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Monitoring Indecent Language on Radio: Findings for August 1-31, 2024

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This report presents findings from the daily monitoring of selected programs on 10 radio stations in Ghana. The data was collected from 1st to the 31st of August 2024. It specifically cites the number of indecent expressions recorded, categorizes these expressions, and identifies the individuals who made the remarks. Additionally, it lists the radio stations where these expressions were made as well as hosts who made indecent remarks. The report concludes with recommendations for relevant stakeholders.

1.1 Background

For the past 31 years, Ghana has maintained a relatively peaceful and democratically stable environment, earning global recognition and favourable rankings. Notably, in the 2022 Global Peace Index (GPI) Report, Ghana was ranked as the most peaceful country in West Africa, 2nd in Africa, and 40th worldwide—an improvement over its 2019 and 2020 rankings. However, the 2023 index saw a significant decline, with Ghana falling to 51st globally, 4th in Africa, and 2nd in West Africa. This decline in rankings is attributed to several factors, including divisive narratives that exacerbate polarization along partisan, ethnic, religious, and chieftaincy lines, as well as the rise of radicalism. These narratives often manifest through hate speech, inflammatory language, political propaganda, and misinformation disseminated via radio.

During election periods, Ghana often witnesses the use of abusive and inappropriate language directed at political opponents, institutions, and other groups. Unfortunately, some radio stations allow political parties and their representatives to misuse the airwaves, with little or no intervention from hosts or presenters. This unchecked behaviour tends to escalate political tensions every four years. In a proactive move to address this issue, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) has been implementing a language monitoring project since 2012. This initiative monitors, reports, and publicly identifies individuals who engage in hate speech and indecent expressions on radio.

Building on insights gained from the 2012, 2016, and 2020 language monitoring projects, the MFWA is once again monitoring radio broadcasts during the 2024 election season. The goal is to contribute to Ghana's peace and democratic stability by fostering a national culture that rejects hate speech, incitement to violence, and other divisive narratives while promoting a narrative of

peaceful coexistence and respectful political discourse. The project involves daily monitoring of selected programs on various radio stations to track and report the use of hate speech and other inappropriate language by politicians and other participants. It also assesses the effectiveness of presenters or hosts in moderating these programs.

2.0 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 discussions. It also involves assessing and reporting how presenters or moderators 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 the monitoring of ten radio stations in Ghana from August 1 to August 31, 2024. The stations were selected based on findings from previous reports, perceived allegiance to or ownership by politicians or politically exposed persons, and geographical spread. Table 1 presents names and regional locations of the 10 radio stations that were monitored under the current phase of the project.

Table 1: Radio stations monitored under the current phase

No.	Name of Radio Station	Region
1	Accra FM	Greater Accra region
2	Angel FM	Ashanti region
3	Ashh FM	Ashanti region
4	North Star Radio	Northern region
5	Oman FM	Greater Accra region
6	Power FM	Greater Accra region
7	Radio Gold	Greater Accra region
8	Wontumi Radio	Ashanti region
9	Zaa Radio	Northern region
10	Akpini Radio	Volta Region

The monitoring is done based on a validated monitoring instrument. Ten 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.

3.0 Findings

Table 2 presents a breakdown of the subjects that were discussed in various news stories, programs, and discussions on the ten selected radio stations monitored in the period under review. Collectively, 65 instances of indecent expressions were recorded specifically focusing on various issues such as elections, political activities, corruption, and development projects.

Table 2: Main subject of news story/programme/discussion

Subject of news story/programme/discussion	Frequency	Percent
Elections-related issues	28	43
Other	20	31
Corruption	6	9
Development Projects	6	9
Political party activities/issues	4	6
President/Vice President/ Presidential affairs	1	2
Total	**65**	**100**

The dominant focus on elections-related topics, accounting for 43% of the discussions, indicates that election periods are a significant trigger for the use of indecent language on radio. Election campaigns often lead to emotionally charged debates, and the monitoring shows that political actors and commentators frequently resort to inappropriate language to attack opponents or stoke tensions. This trend is a critical area of concern, as the use of inflammatory speech during election seasons has historically contributed to heightened political tensions and can threaten Ghana's democratic stability.

The broad "Other" category makes up 31% of the discussions where indecent language was detected. This indicates that beyond elections, various other subjects, including social or economic issues, serve as platforms for inappropriate speech. Radio programs in Ghana cover a range of topics, but this category suggests that hate speech and indecent expressions are not limited to political discourse and can arise in broader public discussions. These findings suggest the need for vigilance across all types of radio content, as various social debates could trigger the use of inappropriate language that exacerbates division. Close to one of every ten of the indecent expressions (9%) were recorded during discussions on corruption. This aligns with the fact that corruption is a deeply contentious issue in Ghana, often leading to public outrage.

The media's coverage of corruption scandals or accusations against political figures provoke heated debates, during which individuals, resort to offensive or derogatory language to express frustration or discredit political opponents. Such language undermine constructive dialogue and increase political tension ahead of the elections. Similar to corruption, development projects also accounted for 9% of the instances of indecent language. These discussions are often politically charged, with parties using development achievements (or lack thereof) as a basis for political attacks. Politicians or commentators use radio as a platform to discredit opponents' development records or make exaggerated claims about their own. This contributes to an atmosphere of hostility, with indecent language being used to score political points or tarnish reputations.
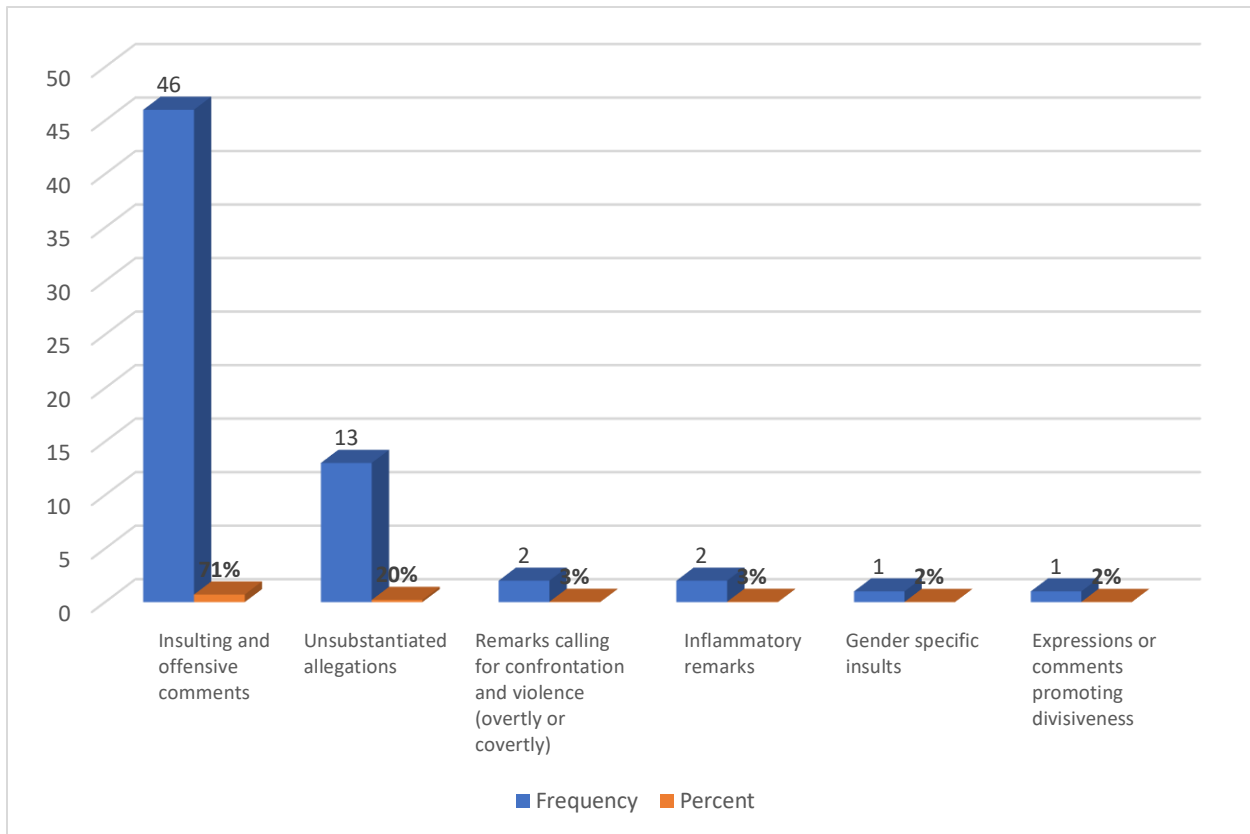
Political party activities accounted for 6% of the instances of indecent language. These discussions include intra-party conflicts, leadership disputes, or strategies, which can become highly charged. The use of indecent language in this context stem from internal rivalries or efforts to rally supporters by denigrating opposing factions or leaders. The presence of this category suggests that political competition is a significant driver of inappropriate rhetoric on radio. Discussions specifically focused on the Presidency (President or Vice President) accounted for only 2% of the cases of indecent language. This suggests that while the highest political offices are subject to media scrutiny, the use of indecent language in relation to these figures is relatively infrequent compared to broader electoral issues or political debates. However, even a small percentage is concerning, as disrespectful language directed at national leaders could further undermine public confidence in governance and foster division.

3.1 Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded
Figure 1 categorizes the types of indecent language violations identified during the period under review, revealing the nature and severity of inappropriate comments made on radio. The results are broken down into six distinct categories, highlighting the prominence of the specific types of language and their frequency of occurrence. The majority of the violations (71%) fall under insulting and offensive comments, making this the most common form of indecent language used on air. This category includes derogatory remarks, personal attacks, and defamatory language aimed at individuals or groups. The high occurrence of offensive language suggests that many political actors and commentators use radio platforms to belittle or discredit others, rather than

engaging in constructive debate. This widespread use of insulting language can have a corrosive effect on political discourse, undermining respect for opposing viewpoints and inflaming tensions within the public sphere as the nation approaches major elections in December 2024.

Figure 1: Categories of Indecent Expressions Recorded

The second most frequent category, accounting for 20%, involves unsubstantiated allegations. This refers to claims or accusations made without sufficient evidence, often intended to tarnish the reputation of political opponents or public figures. In the context of election periods, these allegations range from accusations of corruption to claims of misconduct, without proof to back them up. Such language contributes to mis/disinformation and undermines the credibility of public discourse, as listeners accept these allegations at face value, fostering an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion. Although less frequent, remarks calling for confrontation and violence—whether overt or covert—make up 3% of the indecent language observed. While these instances are relatively rare, they are particularly concerning because they have the potential to incite real-world conflict and destabilize the political environment. Such comments could subtly encourage

supporters to engage in confrontational or violent actions against opponents, thereby posing a direct threat to public safety and peace.

Inflammatory remarks, which also account for 3% of the violations, are statements designed to provoke an intense emotional response. These comments are typically intended to stir up anger that can fuel existing tensions making it harder to maintain a peaceful and respectful public discourse. A smaller proportion of the violations (2%) fall under gender-specific insults, which are offensive comments targeted at individuals based on their gender. This type of language reflects deeply ingrained gender biases and stereotypes, and its use can reinforce harmful narratives about women or men in public life. Although not as common as other forms of indecent language, gender-specific insults highlight the intersection of sexism and political discourse, indicating a need for greater awareness and sensitivity around gender issues in media conversations.

Another 2% of the violations consist of expressions promoting divisiveness, where individuals or groups use language to foster division along ethnic, regional, or political lines. These comments can exacerbate existing social fractures and create an environment of "us versus them," which undermines national unity and social cohesion. Such divisive language is particularly dangerous during election periods, when political parties and their supporters exploit these divisions to gain an advantage.

3.2 Radio Stations and Incidents of Indecent Expressions Recorded

The table 3 presents the distribution of language violations across the ten radio stations monitored in August 2024. The data reveals notable differences in the frequency and type of infractions recorded. Power FM stands out with the highest number of violations, totalling 26, of which 24 involved insulting and offensive comments. This suggests a significant issue with offensive language on this platform, potentially reflecting its role in airing highly charged and inflammatory political discourse. In comparison, Oman FM recorded 15 violations, with a notable presence of both insulting comments (7) and unsubstantiated allegations (6). The spread of unverified claims on Oman FM is concerning, as it indicates that the station may contribute to mis/disinformation in addition to promoting offensive language.

Accra FM, with 11 violations, follows a similar pattern of frequent offensive comments, while also recording instances of remarks promoting violence. Ashh FM and Wontumi Radio recorded fewer violations, but still contributed to the overall pattern of indecent language, particularly in terms of unsubstantiated allegations and insulting comments. Overall, the analysis highlights that Power FM and Oman FM, are notable for hosting discussions that frequently veer into inappropriate or inflammatory language. This underscores the need for stronger moderation policies on these platforms, especially during politically sensitive periods such as elections, to prevent further escalation of tensions and divisive narratives.
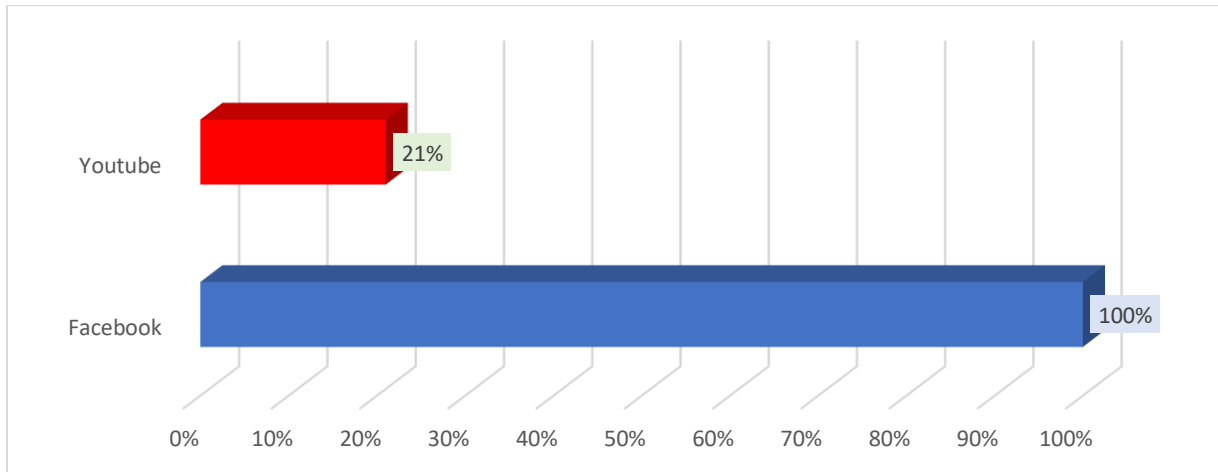
Table 3: Radio stations and the category of violations recorded

Category	Power Fm	Oman Fm	Accra Fm	Ashh Fm	Wontumi Radio	Oyerepa Fm	North Star Radio
Insulting and offensive comments	24	7	10	4	1	0	0
Unsubstantiated allegations	1	6	0	2	4	0	0
Remarks calling for confrontation and violence	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Inflammatory remarks	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Gender specific insults	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Expressions or comments promoting divisiveness	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**26**	**15**	**11**	**6**	**5**	**1**	**1**

3.3. Social Media Broadcast

The findings reveal that a significant portion of the indecent expressions recorded on the radio stations monitored were streamed live on social media platforms (Figure 2). Out of the 65 violations identified, 55 were simultaneously broadcasted on these platforms, indicating a substantial overlap between on-air content and online presence. Facebook and YouTube are key platforms where this inappropriate content is streamed. The findings show that a total of 55 indecent expressions were streamed live, all of which were on Facebook, while YouTube recorded 21 instances.

Figure 2: Social Media platforms that broadcasted violations live on radio

The data highlights that once indecent expressions are aired on radio, they are amplified through social media, expanding their reach. Social media gives these broadcasts a prolonged life, as the offensive language, unsubstantiated allegations, and inflammatory remarks can be accessed, shared, and commented on by a global audience. Unlike the transient nature of radio broadcasts, these posts remain accessible, potentially going viral and further fuelling societal tensions. Furthermore, platforms like Facebook allow users to react and comment in real time, which can exacerbate the spread of inflammatory discourse, as individuals reinforce or escalate the harmful rhetoric. The findings emphasize the need for improved regulation of live-streamed content and more robust social media policies to curb the spread of inappropriate expressions, ultimately fostering a more respectful and informed online environment. Table 4 presents the details of indecent expressions used on the respective radio stations that were also streamed live on social media.

Table 4: Programme including portion of violation streamed live on social media (N=55)

Radio Station	Facebook	YouTube	Total
Power Fm	20	3	20
Oman Fm	15	0	15
Accra Fm	11	11	11
Wontumi Radio	5	5	5
Ashh Fm	3	2	3
North Star Radio	1	0	1
Total	55	21	55

3.4 Culprits of Indecent Expressions Used on Radio

Table 5 shows the names of the individuals who authored the 65 indecent expressions. The expressions are presented according to the identified categories. Further details of the radio stations and the dates on which the categorised expressions were made are presented in the appendix of this report. The findings reveal a clear pattern of misuse of language that is predominantly insulting and offensive, with significant implications for media conduct and public discourse. Mugabe Maase stands out as the most frequent contributor to indecent language, with a total of 19 instances. His remarks are primarily characterized by insulting and offensive comments, highlighting him as a major source of derogatory language on radio.

Yaw Amofa Boakye also features prominently, with 9 instances of indecent language, which include a mix of insulting comments and unsubstantiated allegations. His contributions reflect a broader pattern of offensive communication but with a notable aspect of spreading unverified claims, which could further exacerbate mis/disinformation and public distrust. Kwabena Bobie Ansah, with 7 instances, similarly shows a focus on offensive language, including some remarks that could provoke conflict. His profile, along with others like Listowel Nana Kusi Poku and Bright Botchway, suggests that while the issue of indecent language is concentrated among a few individuals, it is pervasive enough to warrant significant attention.
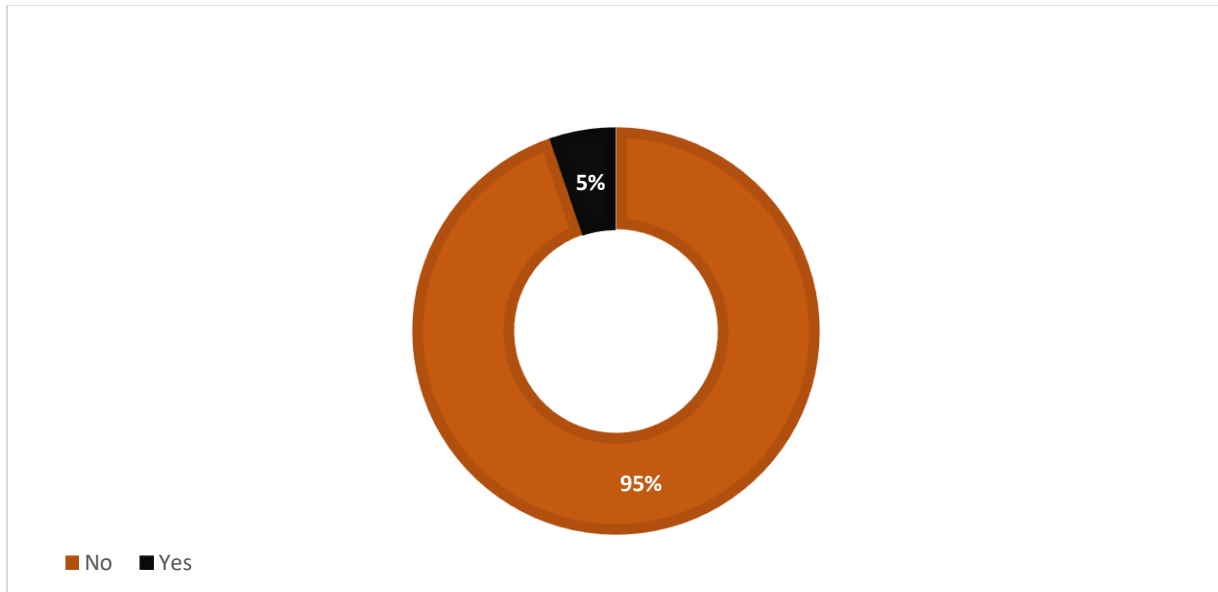
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Table 5: Number and categories of expressions authored by culprit

Culprit	Insulting and offensive comments	Unsubstantiated allegations	Remarks calling for confrontation and violence	Inflammatory remarks	Gender specific insults	Expressions promoting divisiveness	Total
Mugabe Maase	18	1	0	0	0	0	19
Yaw Amofa Boakye	6	2	0	1	0	0	9
Kwabena Bobie Ansah	6	0	1	0	0	0	7
Listowel Nana Kusi Poku	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Bright Botchway	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Chairman Wontumi	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Oheneba Boamah Bennie	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Lawyer Foh Amoaning	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Adu Boahen	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Alexander Owusu	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Ama Dc	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Amoah Yaw Gyamih	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Baah Acheamfour	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Benjamin Bosomprah	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Frederick Adai	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kwaku Antwi Boasiako	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kwame Gavin Agbidza	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Kwesi Kyei	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Mr. Razak	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Owura Adusei	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Paa Solo	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Salam Mustapha	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Unidentfied Texter	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	**46**	**13**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**65**

4.0 Assessment of Moderation of Programmes by Hosts

As part of the language monitoring project, moderators and hosts are evaluated to determine how they conduct themselves on their respective programs and manage discussions to prevent the use of hate speech and other indecent expressions. The findings from the period under review (August 1-31, 2024) shows a stark contrast in the frequency with which moderators attempt to correct discussants on these issues. Out of 38 instances assessed, 36 (95%) indicate that moderators did not attempt to correct discussants who used hate speech or indecent language. This finding is not surprising in that the data shows that majority (65%) of the infractions were perpetuated by show hosts. Hosts are expected to lead conversations and set a professional and respectful tone for their shows. However, the data reveals that they are the most frequent offenders, contributing significantly to the spread of indecent language.

Figure 3: Attempts by show hosts/moderators to correct the use of indecent language on air

More worrying is the fact that some show host read out anonymous messages that are insulting and offensive. Reading out insulting messages without moderation or rejection undermines the role of the host as a responsible gatekeeper of information. Instead of fostering constructive dialogue, the host becomes complicit in spreading harmful speech. This can escalate tensions, particularly in periods of heightened political activity, such as elections, where emotions are already running high. Additionally, the anonymity of the text messages allows individuals to make

inflammatory comments without accountability. The inability to identify the source of the offensive remarks may embolden others to submit similar messages, contributing to a toxic atmosphere on the airwaves. Such practices erode trust in the media and undermine its role as a platform for balanced and respectful discussion.

The remaining (35%) of violations were attributed to discussants, such as guests or participants invited to share their views either in the studio or via virtual means like phone-ins or messages. While discussants have less influence over the program than the hosts, their contributions to the use of offensive language are still considerable. Discussants may feel emboldened to engage in indecent language, especially when the host condones or participates in such behaviour.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This report summarizes the findings from the radio language monitoring exercise conducted between August 1 and August 31, 2024, on ten selected radio stations across Ghana. The objective of the project is to monitor and evaluate the language used by politicians and other public figures on radio shows, including news broadcasts, political debates, and current affairs discussions. The project also examines how program hosts or presenters managed their shows, especially in terms of allowing or preventing the use of hate speech and other inappropriate language.

The findings revealed a troubling pattern, with a total of 65 indecent expressions recorded during the period. The most frequent type of violation involved insulting and offensive remarks, which were most commonly made during discussions on contentious topics like elections, corruption, and development initiatives. Stations such as Power FM, Oman FM, and Accra FM recorded the highest number of these violations. Additionally, the broadcast of these offensive remarks on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube significantly expanded their reach, amplifying their potential impact. The data further underscored the critical role of radio presenters and hosts in either curbing or enabling indecent language. A notable portion of the violations was attributed to the hosts themselves, suggesting a lack of proper moderation and oversight. Of particular concern was Mugabe Maase, the host of Inside Politics on Power FM, who accounted for 19 of the 65 recorded violations, making him the most frequent violator during the period under review.
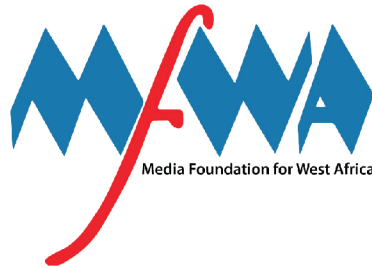
In consideration of the above findings, the MFWA makes the following recommendations:

1. Program moderators should establish and enforce clear ground rules for their shows to maintain decorum.

2. The National Media Commission (NMC), the Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) need to enhance regulatory and self-regulatory mechanisms to enhance media professionalism

3. Radio stations, particularly presenters and moderators, should maintain professionalism by refraining from indecent expressions and ensuring that their guests adhere to respectful, fact-based expressions.

4. Political party leaders should urge their representatives, affiliates, and communicators to prioritize issue-based discussions and avoid using indecent language.

Appendix: Reference to Indecent Expressions Recorded in August 2024

No.	Name of Culprit	Date Reported	Designation	Radio Station	Programme	Violation	Frequency
1	Kwabena Bobie Ansah	01/08/2024	host	Accra Fm	The citizen show	Insulting and Offensive	1
2	Amoah Yaw Gyamih	02/08/2024	discussant	Ashh Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
3	Kwabena Bobie Ansah	02/08/2024	Host	Accra Fm	The citizen show	Insulting and Offensive	1
4	Lawyer Foh Amoaning	02/08/2024	discussant	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	2
5	Mugabe Maase	02/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
6	Mugabe Maase	02/08/2024	Host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	1
7	Chairman Wontumi	05/08/2024	discussant	Wontumi Radio	MORNING SHOW	Unsubstantiated Allegations	3
8	Kwaku Antwi Boasiako	06/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
9	Owura Adusei	06/08/2024	discussant	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
10	Yaw Amofa Boakye	06/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Innuendoes	1
11	Baah Acheamfour	07/08/2024	discussant	Angel Fm	Angel in the morning	Innuendoes	1
12	Kwabena Bobie Ansah	07/08/2024	host	Accra Fm	The cititzen show	Remarks calling for confrontation	1
13	listowell Nana poku	07/08/2024	discussant	Accra Fm	The cititzen show	Insulting and Offensive	1
14	Unidentified Text Message Sender	07/08/2024	discussant	Accra Fm	The cititzen show	Insulting and Offensive	1
15	Kwabena Bobie Ansah	08/08/2024	host	Accra Fm	The citizen show	Insulting and Offensive	1
16	listowell Nana poku	08/08/2024	host	Accra Fm	The citizen show	Insulting and Offensive	2
17	Mugabe Maase	08/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	1
18	Yaw Amofa Boakye	08/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
19	Brian Acheampong	12/08/2024	voice note recorded	North Star Radio	City Prime News	Provocative remarks	1
20	Yaw Amofa Boakye	12/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
21	Adu Boahen	13/08/2024	Discussant	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Insulting and Offensive	1
22	Mugabe Maase	13/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	3
23	Nana Bobie Ansah	13/08/2024	host	Accra Fm	The citizen show	Insulting and Offensive	3
24	Yaw Amofa Boakye	13/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Insulting and Offensive	1
25	Alexander Owusu	14/08/2024	discussant	Ashh Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1

No.	Name of Culprit	Date Reported	Designation	Radio Station	Programme	Violation	Frequency
26	Listowel Nana Kusi Poku	14/08/2024	Discussant	Power Fm	Battle Grounds	Insulting and Offensive	1
27	Oheneba Boamah Bennie	14/08/2024	Host	Power Fm	Battle Grounds	Insulting and Offensive	3
28	Kwame Gavin Agbidza	15/08/2024	discussant	North Star Radio	City Eye Witness News	Provocative remarks	1
29	Mugabe Maase	15/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	5
30	Mugabe Maase	19/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	3
31	Salam Mustapha	19/08/2024	discussant	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Remarks calling for confrontation	1
32	Bright Botchway	20/08/2024	discussant	Ashh Fm	The Peoples Forum	Insulting and Offensive	3
33	KWESI KYEI	21/08/2024	discussant	Wontumi Radio	TALK GHANA	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
34	Mugabe Maase	21/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	3
35	Mugabe Maase	28/08/2024	host	Power Fm	Inside Politics	Insulting and Offensive	1
36	Ama DC	29/08/2024	discussant	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Unsubstantiated Allegations	1
37	Frederick Adai	29/08/2024	discussant	Wontumi Radio	MORNING SHOW	Insulting and Offensive	1
38	Yaw Amofa Boakye	29/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Insulting and Offensive	1
39	Benjamin Bosomprah	30/08/2024	discussant	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Gender Specific	1
40	Mr. Razak	30/08/2024	discussant	Ashh Fm	Key Note	Insulting and Offensive	1
41	Paa Solo	30/08/2024	discussant	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Insulting and Offensive	1
42	Yaw Amofa Boakye	30/08/2024	host	Oman Fm	National Agenda	Insulting and Offensive	4

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