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About PA-X Local

PA-X Local is the first open-access database of written local peace agreements from across a global set of conflict-affected contexts. The local peace agreements included are publicly available written agreements between locally-based and other actors, which address local conflict-generating grievances only within a part of the wider conflict-affected area. PA-X Local offers a glimpse into the processes and outcomes of local peacemaking, including information on how it relates to any national peace process.

This database lists all agreements included on the main PA-X Peace Agreements Database (<http://www.peaceagreements.org/search>) that deal in some way with local issues, in cases of local negotiation practices that are on the margins of wider conflict, or in cases of local/communal violent conflict. Agreements are collected from 1990 to the end of 2019, with global coverage, but publicly released monthly by region from March to June 2020. This collection stems from the work on the main PA-X database and is not exhaustive of all local negotiation practices, since it only brings together documents which are written, formally agreed, and publicly available. Often informal and unwritten agreements are also used in these types of peace processes.

Over the past few years, PSRP has engaged with the emerging research agenda interested in local peacemaking, and the connections between peace processes at multiple levels of politics, which laid the conceptual groundwork for this database. This work by researchers at Edinburgh Law School, at the University of Edinburgh, included the sourcing, translating, and coding of a selection of written local peace agreements. Users are now able to explore and compare the contexts and contents of these agreements at: www.peaceagreements.org/lsearch

Using PA-X Local

As with the PA-X Main database, PA-X Local is open access and available to all, including mediators and parties in conflict, civic actors, and social science researchers. There are numerous potential applications for this data in peacemaking practice, policy-making, and research. This new data could enable, for example:

- Analysis of patterns in local peacemaking over time

- Comparative studies of local peace processes within or across countries
- Examinations of the link between local, regional, and national-level peace processes
- Better understanding of practices of highly localised actors and their influence on wider conflict dynamics
- Case study research to draw out 'lessons learned' for local peacemaking practice
- Learning and teaching on local peacemaking

PSRP is always eager to hear from PA-X users about how they utilise this resource in their work and how the database could be improved. We are particularly keen to hear if you think we have missed out some peace agreements, or have peace agreement texts that should potentially be included. You can reach the programme team at politicalsettlements@ed.ac.uk. We are currently working to produce a User Guide specific to PA-X Local, but for now you can explore our Introductory Guide to PA-X Main (https://www.peaceagreements.org/files/PAX_Leaflet_Version_Last_version.pdf).

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1. www.peaceagreements.org/lsearch

Key definitions

Peace Agreement: A formal, publicly available document, produced after discussion with conflict protagonists and mutually agreed to by some or all of them, addressing conflict with a view to ending it.

Peace Process: A formal attempt to bring political and/or military protagonists of conflict, to some sort of mutual agreement as to how to end the conflict.

Local Peace Agreement: A publicly available written agreement between locally-based actors which addresses local conflict-generating grievances within a part of the wider conflict-affected area.

Local Peace Process: A negotiation process which has reached a written, publicly available agreement that addresses local conflict-generating grievances, within a part of the wider conflict-affected area.

Sourcing and inclusion of documents

Public availability of local peace agreements: The agreements have all been collected through local media sources and/or local contacts, indicating a level of public availability, but the database will not be exhaustive of all local agreements, given the diversity of language and patterns of reporting and local practices. Neither has a strong threshold of research been undertaken on how widely available the text was to the local users, provided that it has been accessible from a publicly available source. This in itself is a characteristic of local agreements.

Local agreement publication status: We include local agreements on the PA-X main database if they meet at least one of the following two criteria:

- There is evidence that 25 conflict-related deaths have occurred as a result of the local conflict that the agreement pertains to; and
- There is evidence of a clear nexus between the local conflict, the local agreement, and the national-level conflict that came before or after the local agreement.

So once we find a document that we would potentially classify as a local agreement we take the following steps:

- Firstly, we make a decision on the number of deaths in conflict, and check with reliable sources whether it does or does not reach the threshold of 25 conflict related deaths
- Secondly, we check whether there is a wider conflict to which this is part of the same conflict system.
- If the answer to both of these steps is 'no' then we do not include the agreement in either the PA-X Main database or PA-X Local.

Due to the availability and accessibility of some peace agreement texts compared others, in some contexts there may be more peace agreements on PA-X Local relating to certain actors or areas of the conflict. This does not in any way suggest that there is a hierarchy of agreements or that we have made such an assessment of importance – PA-X Local only includes agreements that we were able to access. We encourage anyone who thinks we have missed agreements to get in touch with the programme team at politicalsettlements@ed.ac.uk.

Exclusion of oral agreements: We view local peace processes as processes that are brokered and negotiated by local/community leaders, within a particular locality, focusing on local conflict-affected grievances that may take either a written or an unwritten form. The database is a collection of the agreements which have been made publicly available in written form, and does not include records of oral agreements, as we can only be sure of the commitments made when we have a document, and because PA-X local builds on PA-X main, which is an attempt to analyse the formal publicly available commitments to peace made by actors in the conflict.

However, we understand that oral agreements are part of a fundamental expression of everyday local peacemaking for some actors, and can be just as important and powerful as written

agreements, depending on the local culture. Systems of oral agreement making may be widely understood as contractually binding, either within the wider country or locale, or just mutually between the parties that commit to them. In either case, they are often underpinned by sets of local practices shaped by informal or cultural laws. The importance of oral agreements present the PA-X database with challenges. Notably, it means that the PA-X Local data cannot be a complete 'census' of peace agreement practice as is the ambition with PA-X main. This is not something that could, in our view, be adequately addressed by trying to find and code what may or may not have been oral understandings. However, PA-X Local does still capture those agreements that were formally documented, and as there appears to be an increasing tendency to record agreements, it gives an important qualitative insight into local agreement-making practice. We will be devoting more of our research to explore the role of oral agreements in the future.

Recording local peace processes: Please be aware that the database does not currently systematically label distinct local peace processes, but mostly groups these as 'local processes'. This is because often the fragmented nature of these processes means that each one may reflect a distinct process, but sometimes in a context in which local agreement making was a 'persistent practice'. As we did not have sufficient information, and it would not have facilitated searchers, and as many local processes overlap in complex ways, we have grouped these. However, where either time lapses, or very distinct in-country geographies meant that quite different sets of local processes were at play, we have made a distinction between groups of local process. For example, there are two local peace process records for Somalia ('Somalia/Puntland: Local Processes' and 'Somali Local Peace Processes'), aggregating a variety of geographically dispersed peace processes into one 'catch-all' process. In Syria, where it would be possible and more accurate to group local processes, we have not done so, but have written a separate note (<https://www.peaceagreements.org/publication/58>) which indicates how we understand the different actor permutations to play out. We hope that the database facilitates better understanding of how local processes relate to each other or not, over time. We would also then aim to add more accurate records to better reflect the diverse and disaggregated nature of local peace processes. A more complete list of such records will only become available on a later version of PA-X, and will require collaboration with other projects and researchers.

Data and coding

All agreements on PA-X Local are included in Version 3 of the main PA-X database launched in January 2020 and are therefore coded for meta-data and 225 substantive categories ranging from provisions on power sharing, to human rights, and the security sector. For more on the Peace Agreements Database and Dataset, see the website and supporting documents for the main PA-X collection, at www.peaceagreements.org/search

Additional data features of PA-X Local include:

- Information about the peace process that led to the signing of the agreement
- Analysis of potential links to national-level peace processes
- Name and geographical referencing of the conflict area
- Categorisation of peace agreement participant types, including mediators

- Coding of four new categories of substantive issues addressed by agreements: use of rituals and prayer; acknowledgement of grievances; references to cattle rustling or livestock theft; and, removal of social cover.

Unlike PA-X Main, PA-X Local includes substantive categories that include information about the peace agreement and peace process that has been derived from and analysed using secondary sources, and not purely coding from the text of the agreement. Where this is the case, it is clearly stated in the accompanying PA-X Local Codebook. For a comprehensive list of metadata and category definitions, see the PA-X Local Codebook, at www.peaceagreements.org/lsearch

Searching and downloading PA-X Local data

The search page allows for search by substantive categories and word searches, either in simple or advanced search modes. There are also the options of downloading the search results in .pdf format and downloading the portions of the dataset that correspond to the search criteria. The dataset may be downloaded from the website in csv or Excel format.

Please note that the PA-X Local data outputs only contain core descriptive variables for each agreement and the local-issues-specific variables. The PA-X Local data outputs can merge with the outputs of the main PA-X collection, as the agreements in PA-X Local are also available in PA-X Main, and share the same Agreement ID.

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As PA-X Local is a part of the PA-X Peace Agreements Database, please also see the full list of people who have contributed to the PA-X project to date (<https://www.peaceagreements.org/files/Acknowledgements%20-%20Copy%201.pdf>).

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