



*Version 2 (09.2020)*

## **Coding Review Process**

ACLED takes a variety of steps to ensure that the data we publish are accurate, thorough and accessible. The vast majority of ACLED time is spent on three tasks:

- (a) Sourcing and reviewing source materials
- (b) Collecting and inputting data
- (c) Cleaning and reviewing those data and sources

As of 2018, this process is repeated weekly for all regions ACLED covers. The sourcing and collecting decisions and instructions are available in several documents on the Methodology page of the website. The cleaning and reviewing procedures are discussed below.

The cleaning and reviewing procedure occurs both on a daily and weekly basis. On a daily basis, the researchers review, code and correct materials. Researchers often pose questions to the research managers or the ACLED researcher community to clarify difficult coding decisions. Researchers also use a coding platform to assure that current decisions on names, interactions, locations etc. conform to previous iterations for each group and location. Decisions on specific matters – such as a new active group – are flagged for review. ACLED coders maintain a list of conflict actors, noting the name and classification of actors based on their stated goals and objectives. Over time, these goals and objectives – and hence classification – can change, especially as groups grow or splinter. For example, what may at first be a part of a state military force may over time give way to a rebel movement, such as the mutiny of the military forces of South Sudan and the emergent SPLA/M-IO rebel movement. Or a political militia may take on a new goal of striving to overthrow a state, which would change their classification from a political militia to a rebel movement. Rebel groups may also splinter into new factions as different rebel leaders begin pushing varying agendas (e.g., the FDLR rebel group operating in Rwanda split into a number of different factions over time). These, and other decisions, are reviewed immediately.

Following the data collection, researchers review their data to ensure intra-coder reliability. After the review, every researcher submits their data and source materials to their research manager, who proceeds to review these data for inter-coder reliability across the region. Once this cleaning and review are complete, these data are then passed to a final manual reviewer, who reviews the notes and details to ensure that the inter-code standards are met, and that the methodology is applied consistently across different regions and contexts. Once the manual review of these weekly datasets is complete, the data are then sent to a data manager for automated data cleaning and formatting. Those data are then uploaded for public use.



Following this process, researchers receive detailed feedback as to their coding decisions and alerts going forward.

In addition, the weekly real-time coding, two other processes are ongoing: (1) a list of active conflicts to review and/or 'backdate' are assigned to researchers, and (2) a constant search and identification for events to review, revisit or question. Details of the active reviewed conflicts are available on the methodology page, and updates to these conflicts are reviewed, cleaned and uploaded as they are completed. These reviews are crucial because as time passes more information may surface about additional conflict events (e.g., an additional conflict location or date of conflict). These conflict events are added in order to be able to most accurately understand conflict patterns.

The second process is a response to the often-vague details that immediately emerge from a conflict event. ACLED may update the details of events once new information comes to light, and those details are changed in the dataset and those altered data are then uploaded. For example, a group may not claim responsibility for an event until sometime after the conflict event. Given ACLED's real-time coding of conflict, when information about the group is not known, ACLED will code the group as an unidentified armed group, and revise accordingly with new information as it becomes available. If new information about the group surfaces at a later date – e.g., a group comes forward claiming responsibility for an attack – then the event is updated to reflect the new information. Another example may be inconsistent reports in the aftermath of a conflict event, especially with regards to the number of fatalities. Over time, more in-depth reports may surface, such as those by human rights organizations. These details are updated in the already-existing events in order to ensure the most accurate conflict coding is presented.