

**Multiple But Invisible:
Reparations Demands
For Colonial Crimes In
The Great Lakes Region**



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01

Executive summary

This report aims to understand demands for reparations from Africa and African civil society organizations and to, thereby, contribute to the development of an agenda for reparations for colonial crimes and slavery. It is part of a broader African Futures Lab project, Pursuing an agenda for reparations for colonial crimes and slavery, and identifies demands voiced specifically from Africa's Great Lakes region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda).

This Executive Summary reviews the main conclusions that emerged from our research, which will be developed in the following pages. Our conclusions are divided into four parts, namely: (i) The challenge of problematization as a prerequisite for any research into the complex issue of claims for reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonization in Africa's Great Lakes region; (ii) Bringing to light civil society's approaches to these demands; (iii) Demands for dignity; (iv) The modalities of demands, in other words, how civil society actors attempt to be heard. We close with some recommendations.

Reparations: a complex issue

Our field research shows that raising the question of reparation for crimes of slavery and colonial crimes in Africa's Great Lakes region requires a series of prerequisites. First, a distinction must be made between colonial crimes and crimes of slavery. As the former are related to Belgian and German colonization in the region, they are much better known and problematized, due to their recent nature, while the latter, which concern the Transatlantic slave trade and Arab-Muslim slavery are much less so. Beyond the fact that this gap is probably linked to the time frame (slavery being considered very remote) these two events have not received the same attention. Moreover, more interest has been shown for the colonial period, particularly the period of Belgian colonization in Rwanda and Burundi, which followed the interruption of German colonization at the end of the First World War.

Secondly, addressing reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonization in Africa's Great Lakes region also means being able to respond to the criticism that this line of inquiry is Eurocentric or concerns African diasporas in Europe more than Africans living on the continent, who, so it is said, have other concerns. Our field research shows that the answer to these criticisms should not be to question whether there are actual demands for reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonialism on the continent. Rather, the best response should be that reparations for these crimes are first and foremost a justice imperative, and that the origin of the claims is secondary. The benefit of such a response is threefold: for one, it ensures that the legitimacy of claims is not subjected solely to the will of



individuals who, though all formerly colonized populations, may have different points of view. Secondly, it helps us to understand the diversity of viewpoints on the continent, and their varying conditions of possibility.

Additionally, addressing reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonialism in Africa's Great Lakes region raises the crucial question of how, as researchers, we expect these demands for reparation to be formulated by civil society organizations. For example, many civil society organizations believe that "it is not because there are no concrete actions to demand reparation for these crimes from civil society organizations, that it means clear and serious demands do not exist" (Interview with civil society member, Spring 2023). They cite, for example, the (informal) "claims" local farmers in rural areas have made regarding land concessions that were granted to the Catholic Church during the colonial period, and which, from their point of view, should now be returned to them. According to those organizations, even though there is no formal action underway that can be considered a demand for reparation, this claim is no less important and should be taken very seriously. Hence, the investigation of crimes tied

to slavery and colonialism in the African Great Lakes region requires us to take a step back and consider the different ways in which the issue of reparations might arise and be formulated.

This is why, as a result, the role of civil society in the Great Lakes region of Africa is often merely conceptualized as one of formulating demands. Civil society is not given credit for (i) collecting local and informal ways of articulating demands for reparations, or (ii) building on their own capacity to establish connections between justice demands for the crimes of colonialism and slavery and the human rights work in which they are already engaged. It is quite clear that the development of expertise on the issue of reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonialism in Africa's Great Lakes region will depend to some extent on the technical and financial support provided by donors to civil society organizations. But it will be difficult to count on the support of traditional international donors on these issues, as donors often direct their funding towards human rights violations committed by the governments of countries in the region, and never towards violations linked to the acts of countries from the North.

Finally, our field research shows that it is a mistake to think that claims for human rights violations derived from colonization should naturally be made by the aggrieved. In fact, as has been said repeatedly by several African thinkers on the subject of life after colonization, after so much violence, victims are often struggling to heal themselves, that is, when they are not reproducing the same violence. The same applies for many civil society organizations in Africa's Great Lakes region who are calling for strengthening. It's important to listen to them. Yet, as stated earlier, we don't need to be convinced that reparation is needed before initiating a conversation. Provided that we share the same sense of injustice in the face of the violence of colonialism and slavery, we can start discussing different visions for reparation for these crimes, with serenity.

Bringing civil society discourse to life

These considerations led us to examine different types of civil society organizations in order to gain an overall view of how demands for reparations for the crimes of slavery and colonialism are formulated in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Three categories emerged from our fieldwork: (i) first, organizations that can be described as general practitioners, i.e. those advocating reparations for crimes against humanity in general, including crimes linked to colonization. These organizations essentially address human rights and argue that transitional justice must go as far back as the colonial period. They are therefore indirectly addressing the issue of colonial crimes, although this subject is not their main target. (ii) Then there are specialized organizations, i.e. organizations that are addressing some aspects of colonial crimes (such as debt or restitution, among others) and that are specialized

(meaning that they have solid expertise and knowledge as a basis for their advocacy work). These organizations are not only specialized in reparations, but they also cover other areas (such as good governance, social justice, etc.). (iii) Finally, there are specialized organizations that were created to exclusively address a specific aspect of reparations for colonial crimes, such as associations for the cause of mixed-race children, associations for the cancellation of colonial debt, etc.

The process of categorizing these organizations has enabled us to understand how expertise is being built up on the subject of reparations and how they gain legitimacy. Furthermore, while some organizations specifically address reparations for colonial crimes and slavery, numerous individuals have strong convictions on the matter that they defend in various activities or arenas as members of civil society without necessarily formally documenting their actions.

In Burundi, few civil society organizations make demands for reparation. Those that do are either closely associated with the government or have been somewhat co-opted to take a stand on this issue. In other words, they represent the voice of civil society in a debate framed and led by the ruling party. From the government's perspective, however, the claims brought forward by Burundian civil society appear to stem from discussions undertaken by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Commission was established in 2014 to "investigate and establish the truth about serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed during the period from February 26, 1885, to December 4, 2008, the end of the war." From this point of view, Burundi is quite advanced on reparations issues, insofar that it has already proposed a compensation amount for the crime of colonization, notably through a study carried out at Senate level. The many debates among civil society actors surrounding these claims can thus be read as a part of this state-led framework.

In Rwanda, very few civil society organizations take an interest in reparation, although many have very clear views on it. Many of the organizations align themselves with the position of the state, which considers the issue to be a matter of sovereignty falling under the purview of Parliament. As a result, the involved civil society members play an advisory role. Moreover, reparations claims in Rwanda are often associated with the genocide. Since colonization is understood as an institution that established or reinforced the Hutu/Tutsi ethnic categorization and hierarchization, it is considered a remote cause of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. In this context, to speak of the damage done by colonization is also to recall the local conflicts fostered within Rwandan society by colonialism's will to distinguish, categorize, oppose and hierarchize.

In the DRC, civil society organizations working on damages and reparations tied to colonialism and slavery do so

independently from the government. Their positions are based on different ideas and trajectories. Indeed, debates on these claims are often part of broader social movements in Africa (more specifically in West Africa) and Europe (notably in Belgium and France). The LUCHA movement, for example, has been taking part in activities organized by social movements in West Africa for several years now (always in conjunction with European movements), and in this context has been disseminating ideas on reparations in the DRC.

Finally, it should be emphasized that civil society's point of view on reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonization in Africa's Great Lakes region is closely tied to civil society's relationship to the state in each country. In other words, even if there are unanimous condemnations of the crimes and demands for reparation, civil society organizations express their opinion only insofar as the government allows them to do so. Differently put, instances where civil society's views do not align with the government's are evidence of a context where the debate on reparations is less controlled and centralized at state level.

In countries where civil society organizations are given more freedom to express their demands without having to subscribe to government discourse, their demands are, to some extent, articulated in the terms of - or influenced by - pan-African debates or debates in the diaspora. On the other hand, in countries where civil society is not framing its demands freely and is instead forced to comply with government discourse, there is a clear connection between civil society's demands and national political realities. This raises the question of how to ensure that reparations demands articulated in the Great Lakes region of Africa take into account both local concerns and those of the diaspora.

Demands for dignity

There are currently several demands for reparations for colonial crimes and slavery in Africa's Great Lakes region. These include demands for: (i) recognition (acknowledgment of crimes, apologies, forgiveness); (ii) legal proceedings (the opportunity for legal proceedings and their affordances); (iii) reparation (financial reparation, debt cancellation, recognition and compensation for crimes against mixed-raced children); (iv) restitution (demands for the return of artefacts, archives, and human remains that were stolen/taken/plundered during the colonial period); (v) remembrance (recognition, teaching, and awareness-raising on colonial continuities and legacies).

It is very important to understand how civil society organizations formulate their demands for reparation, since these demands are being expressed differently, depending on whether they come from state or civil society actors. This is at least the case in the DRC, where the Congolese government's political strategy reflects a certain restraint



towards the Belgian government, whereas civil society is much more radical in formulating its demands. Later in this report, we discuss more concretely how civil society organizations in Rwanda and Burundi position themselves with regards with their respective governments.

There is a shared belief among civil society organizations in Africa's Great Lakes region that the wrongdoings of colonization still have effects today. In Burundi, the Western world's harms consisted both in supporting UPRONA (the Tutsi party) after independence, but, above all, in the West's mobilization against the Hutu ruling party (CNDD-FDD) since the crisis in 2015. The West's role is the main reason why Burundi's ruling party deploys a specific form of anti-colonial discourse that often refers to the 2015 crisis in Burundi. In the DRC, however, debates about the colonial past are rather aligned with those unfolding in Belgium. But while Congolese civil society is highly critical and radical on the subject, the government is more tempered, for strategic reasons linked to its Belgian and European interests. In Rwanda, civil society's discourse on reparations revolves around the question of European countries' role during the genocide and how the Rwandan government has used the issue to serve its own interests.

So, despite each country's specificity, demands for reparation in the Great Lakes region are deeply shaped by the region's history, which impacts how the issue is

rendered as a social problem (problematized) in each context. Accordingly, several aspects of this history deserve to be mentioned and are discussed in the report: (i) debates in the DRC on the 1960s Belgian-Congolese dispute; (ii) debates in Burundi at the end of the 1990s on Belgian and German colonization (in the context of the Arusha negotiations); (iii) debates in the 1990s on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR); (iv) other debates in the three countries linked to various crises (1959 in Rwanda, 1972 in Burundi) and other talks (1989 in Rwanda, 1992 in the DRC), among others.

Ultimately, it is clear that the shape of debates on reparations for colonial crimes is not specific to a given country. As mentioned earlier, much of the discourse circulating on the issue is linked to meetings of pan-African activists in West Africa. In other cases, the discourse is connected to debates in the former metropolises, via members of the region's diasporas (which are no longer made up exclusively of people from the African country living in Europe, but also of people who are circulating between the two regions). And finally, some of the groups articulating demands are formed on a sub-regional basis (e.g.: mixed-race people) and are represented in both the African and European countries. This glocal or circular characteristic of the demands leads us to redefine what we mean by claims "from Africa".

Fighting to be heard

Our research shows that claims are made in certain arenas, but that their outcome depends on more than just a desire to render justice. This finding raises the question of the political work that must precede reparations, and what renders it effective. Which, in turn, raises the question of resources, alliances, and synergies.

First, on the question of spaces and arenas, up to now, most reparations claims have been made in the media. Occasionally, they have been brought before former Belgian colonial authorities, such as the Belgian government and the Belgian embassy, among others. We also identified the case of mixed-race women who brought forward a lawsuit against the Belgian State for the suffering they incurred after the Belgian colonial administration tore them away from their families, thereby devastating their childhoods and shattering their lives. This legal case is a valuable resource for imagining the conditions of possibility for future potential claims, as well as the conditions for their success.¹

As far as resources are concerned, most organizations face challenges in carrying out this work, whether in terms of financial resources or of knowledge. Traditional donors are not prepared to commit to these issues and most organizations whose portfolios would be relevant to civil society's reparations demands are simply not working on the subject. As a result, civil society organizations need to identify other means of addressing colonial crimes and slavery and also think hard about how to formulate

and present their demands. Resources are very limited and organizations must find their own funding, which tremendously limits the scope and ambition of the campaigns that civil society actors can envision. In terms of alliances and synergies, in some instances, we point out alliances within civil society that were created around specific events, such as the visit of the King of Belgium in the DRC in 2022. But such alliances remain circumstantial. In Burundi, for example, we also identified existing alliances between civil society and the state, or between civil society and the UN. In the DRC, we noticed how the demands brought to the Belgian state helped to galvanize civil society. But forming alliances with the technical and financial partners with whom these organizations usually work on issues of human rights and reparation for crimes has not been easy, given the sensitivity of the issue for the relevant European countries. The alliances and synergies that made the mixed-race women's lawsuit against the Belgian state possible should be investigated further to build on this experience for future struggles.

Main recommendations

In terms of recommendations, there are at least four aspects of civil society's engagement with colonial crimes and slavery that require our attention:

- First, civil society must be recognized as central actors for their legitimacy, neutrality, and their role as guardians of the common interest.
- Second, for civil society organizations to be able to carry out their work effectively, civil society organizations' efforts need to be backed up with enhanced knowledge on the issue through, for example, a strong network, both internally (with local populations) and externally (across Africa and with diasporas).
- Third, civil society must be able to put forward proposals for redress and serve as a relay for actors at the local level and the least powerful actors.
- Fourth, civil society organizations must play the role of "watchdogs" by monitoring government action on reparation for colonial crimes.



Most of the crimes of slavery and colonization that emerge from our interviews show the extent of colonial violence. From a legal standpoint, the question arises of the qualification of such violence. In other words, what is at stake in the struggle for reparations is also whether the formerly colonized will be able to challenge how former metropolises **impose their vision of colonial history and inflict a legal language on victims that in part constrains their expression and experience of colonial violence.**

- To avoid such pitfalls, civil society's demands for reparation must be preceded by preparatory work: this means gathering resources, alliances, and synergies. As was revealed during our discussions, civil society needs support in order to accomplish its mission in the struggle for reparation. According to the organizations we worked with, one of the main challenges is the lack of interest on the part of their technical and financial partners. Anchored in the political choices of bilateral or multilateral cooperation articulated in the North, these organizations prefer to focus on post-colonial crimes. **Pressure is needed to get these partners to reconsider the urgency of getting involved in civil society's work on reparation.**

- Civil society needs support to face not only former metropolises, which must provide repair, but also their own governments, whose reparation priorities are not always those of the people. This support must include strengthening civil society's knowledge, networks, advocacy, and lobbying for reparation. Such strengthening would also bolster civil society's legitimacy with stakeholders and with the populations it represents. Yet, resistance from former metropolises is strong, and formerly colonized countries are in a weak position because they are still dependent on the European nations. The position of Great Lakes states with regards to former colonizing powers only reinforces our point that civil society, which has the privilege of being subject to less pressure than the state, must play a crucial role in the fight for reparations.

Civil society in the Great Lakes region can only benefit from having a multiplicity of organizations interested in the issue of reparations, a network to draw on, and legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders. From such a base, civil society actors can build an appropriate working strategy and an effective network for advancing the fight for reparations.

02

Introduction

There are still strong tensions in some former metropolises over whether colonization and slavery constitute crimes against humanity. Yet, in other spheres, it is increasingly common to hear valid proposals on modalities of reparations for colonial crimes and slavery. Many actors involved in those conversations believe that debates on reparations must not remain Eurocentric. Rather, they hold that it is necessary to give an opportunity for voices from Africa to be heard; better still, to listen to these voices. And, listening to Africa means paying attention to what all Africans have to say, i.e., Africa in all its geographical and political multiplicity – North, West, Central, East, and Southern Africa – but also, African actors in all their diversity, including states, civil society, and beyond.

This report is part of an effort to understand demands for reparations coming from Africa and African civil societies, and, more specifically, to contribute to the development of an agenda for reparations for colonial crimes and slavery. It aims to synthesize the demands coming from Africa's Great Lakes region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda), as part of the broader African Futures Lab (AfaLab) project, "Pursuing an agenda for reparations for colonial crimes and slavery."

This project fits into the larger goal to pursue recognition and repair for past and contemporary structural racial injustices between states and peoples. It is based on the observation that historical and contemporary racial injustices continue to be invisible, and that this invisibilization both results in the perpetuation of injustices and impedes affected and aggrieved populations' access to justice. Hence the need to (a) invest in the production and dissemination of relevant knowledge to make historical and contemporary racial injustices visible, and (b) produce and disseminate sufficient information to enable access to justice for those affected by racial injustices.

To contribute to the development of this African agenda on reparations for colonial crimes and slavery, AfaLab has set up five research projects corresponding to the five regions of the continent. The goal of this research is to take stock of ongoing mobilizations for reparations in each region, and to analyze the most "promising" among them. It is within this broader framework that the present report identifies reparation demands in Africa's Great Lakes region.

This report, combined with those to be produced in other parts of Africa, will provide AfaLab with a solid analysis on reparations for colonial crimes and slavery. And it will enable us to support the demands of African civil society actors, who must continue to play an important role in the development of an African agenda on reparations.

More specifically, the report will attempt to answer the following questions: (a) What are the reparations demands



for crimes committed during colonization? (b) Who are the actors making these demands? With what resources (political, legal, media, material)? What constraints do they face? Who are their allies? (c) In what arenas are these demands brought forward? To whom are they addressed? (d) What is the history of the demands? e) What do the demands for reparations enable mobilized actors to do? What do they prevent them from doing?

In other words, this project seeks to define: the demands that are being made; the actors formulating them; the demands' targets; the resources or modalities used; the spaces/arenas where demands are formulated; the alliances forged and the challenges encountered in this process; the history of the demands more generally; and how effective these actions have been.

To answer these questions, we conducted a literature review and interviewed several players from the Great Lakes region (for more details, see appendix).

The following pages provide: (1) a brief overview of colonial history in the region; (2) a cartography of colonial crimes and their historicity; (3) reparation demands and their various modalities; and (4) recommendations based on an analysis of weaknesses/challenges and opportunities/strengths.

03

Colonial imperialism in Africa's great lakes

The crimes of European colonization from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, including the post-colonial period, are becoming recognized worldwide in recent years, raising the question of reparations. Driven by the Black Lives Matter 2020 mobilizations worldwide against racism and anti-Blackness, more and more people have sought to understand what really happened during those dark centuries of colonial and slavery violence and their consequences in the present day. At the same time, it's clear that everything possible has been done globally to silence this history, or to tell only part of it. It has even been portrayed as an incidental parenthesis in European history, which has always been presented as glorious and as a model of humanity. Yet, slavery and colonization were both the product of a biopolitical system based on racial violence, and instrumental in the realization of Western modernity, in both its conception and making.

Firstly, as far as slavery is concerned, the history of the countries of Africa's Great Lakes has been particularly marked. In the first millennium AD, slavery was part of the maritime trade from the Great Lakes region of East Africa to Persia, China, and India. At the time, Black slaves were considered a commodity, albeit secondary to gold and ivory (Chapurukha, Kusimba, 2004). This small-scale slave trade consisted in raids targeting women and children along Lake Tanganyika (Ibid.). Later, slavery evolved into the "Eastern slave trade," supplying first the ancient Near East during the Antiquity, then the Arab-Muslim world from the seventh to the twentieth century, peaking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Lewis, 1990). Slaves came mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, including the eastern part of the DRC in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By 1840, traders from Zanzibar had reached the present-day territories of Kivu and Maniema in eastern DRC. The "Western slave trade" was just as systematic as the Arab-Muslim trade and consisted in a triangular trade from the West coast of Africa to the New World, including the Transatlantic slave trade (Pétre-Grenouilleau, 2004). Having particularly affected the DRC, this Transatlantic slave trade lasted for around four centuries (from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century) and involved the capture, purchase, and sale of African slaves who were transported to European colonies in the Americas, the Caribbean, and South America to work on plantations and in mines (Sparks, 2017). The history of the trade in Black enslaved people has had a devastating impact on Africa's Great Lakes region and its inhabitants: population decline, loss of skills and knowledge, and the destruction of cultures, among other effects (N'diaye, 2008; Thomas, 2006).

Secondly, the colonial period (from 1885 until 1960 in the DRC, 1961 in Rwanda, and 1962 in Burundi) introduced European law to Africa's Great Lakes region, and establishes European political and territorial sovereignty (Coquery-Vidrovitch 2001). After the Berlin Conference in 1884, Belgian King Leopold II took possession of a territory he named the Congo Free State. He launched explorations and began the development of communication routes with a view to gain control of the entire territory. This endured until 1894, at the end of the war against the Arab-Swahili (Ibid.).

At that time, Rwanda and Burundi still belonged to Germany under the terms of the Berlin Conference. On the Rwandan side, it was the German Count Gustav Adolf von Götzen who officially entered in 1894 (Bindseil, 1992). Unlike Rwanda, whose king accepted the German proposals, King Mwezi Gisabo of Burundi opposed Germany's propositions. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century (1903) that Germany finally subdued Burundi (Ibid.). So, despite the fact that the speeches at the Berlin Conference revolved around the need to go to Africa to civilize its populations (Brunschwig, 2009), these were indeed wars of conquest in which the Africans did not agree with the logics and modalities of the "civilizing project" (Ibid.). Cunning and force had to be used in order to implement colonial dominion. The reality is that this conquest was part of a project to deeply exploit populations, their resources and, more broadly, their territories.

The Democratic Republic of Congo

Belgium took control of Congolese territories and communities as soon as the Berlin Agreement was signed; this marked the beginning of colonization (Blanchard, 1889). An ordinance of the General Administration of the Congo Free State, issued on July 1, 1885, gave the colonial state the right to claim all territories and lands not effectively occupied by the so-called indigènes or local communities, which were composed of various populations. The diversity of settlements in the DRC can be explained by the vastness of the Congolese basin, which at the time was the scene of major migrations where numerous kingdoms met to trade (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998).

Under the control of Leopold II, expeditions and the development of communication routes were launched in the Congo Free State. Exploration ended in 1894 with the war against the Arab-Swahili (Clément et al., 2004). Once most of the territory was secured, intensive exploitation began. This was the beginning of King Leopold II's quest for fortune by any means necessary (Ibid.). Lacking a proper administration, he resorted to subcontracting agreements with concessions and chartered companies to exploit the DRC. Then, he proceeded by taking over so-called vacant and masterless lands (untenanted and unowned lands), without regard to ancestral rights (Mugangu, 1997). The local population was subjected to forced labor for the

construction of infrastructure such as railroads, for mining production, and for agricultural labor on large plantations. All this enabled King Leopold II to make a fortune (Vanthmesche, 2007).

Indeed, it was the decree issued by the General Administration of the Congo Free State on July 1, 1885 that enabled King Leopold II to seize, exploit, and even concede any piece of land that was seemingly not occupied or cultivated. The Decree of 1885, which gave notables the power to regulate land use rights in local communities, recognized the application of customs to the latter, but with no possibility of alienation. The 1885 Ordinance and Decree formed the legal basis for Congolese territories, insofar as they enabled the colonial state to grant vast tracts of land to private or semi-public companies. For example, in the east of the DRC and in Kivu in particular, so-called vacant lands were placed under the management of private companies (Pèlerin et al. 2011: 35-36). The indigenous people who had lost their land were then used as labor in a series of migrations that took place in the 1930s. It was from then on that indigenous towns and so-called extra-customary centers flourished, housing people working in colonial concessions and businesses (Denaeyer et al., 1952).

During the years 1885-1908, the population, weary of the exactions they were suffering - forced labor, murder, torture, mutilation - began to protest against this treatment. They received support from personalities such as American writer Mark Twain, English journalist Edmond Morel, and British diplomat Roger Casement, among others, who condemned the abuses (Conrad, 2009). By dint of these protests, King Leopold II relinquished his colony to the Belgian State (M'Bokolo, 1992) and in 1908, the Congo Free State fell under the tutorship of the Belgian Parliament and took the name of Belgian Congo. The population's situation began to improve with the development of health services (anti-malaria efforts), and educational services due to the construction of schools and churches by missionaries (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998). However, forced labor persisted, especially in the mines, and apartheid methods continued to be widespread; whites were not allowed to live in the same neighborhoods as Blacks, and Blacks were not allowed to join the police force or access higher education (Ibid.). It was not until the end of the First World War that the so-called évolués class emerged, consisting of a minority of Congolese people who had begun to "acculturate to the European way of life" and who were usually educated, wage-earners, and city-dwellers (Van Reybrouck, 2010). Among this class, Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasavubu, and Moïse Tshombe emerged as leaders of the struggle for independence (De Witte, 2000), which was finally won in 1960.

Burundi

The history of Burundi, like that of neighboring countries, is marked by the existence of an ancient kingdom pre-

dating the colonial period. The Kingdom of Burundi was established from the sixteenth or seventeenth century on a territory inhabited since the first millennium BC (Mworoha, 1977). The Mwamis represented the supreme authority of a highly structured monarchy based on the principle of divine right. They expanded their territory through conquests at the expense of neighboring kingdoms and consolidated their power by relying on an aristocratic caste often belonging to the Baganwa royal family (Lemarchand, 1970).

In 1890, German troops arrived in the Great Lakes region. They reached Usumbura – present-day Bujumbura - in 1899 and set up a military post that enabled them to conquer the Kingdom of Burundi (Acquier, 1986). On June 6, 1903, the Germans signed a protective treaty with Mwami Mwezi Gisabo, the Kiganda Treaty, which established German supremacy (Ibid.). However, this supremacy did not survive for long. It collapsed in 1916 during the First World War in the face of troops from neighboring Belgian Congo. At the Versailles Conference in 1919, the Germans renounced their colonies and Belgium obtained a mandate over the province of Ruanda-Urundi (Eggers, 2006). Belgium instrumentalized Hutu, Tutsi and Twa socio-professional perceptions to the detriment of clans, which were sociological realities in Burundi (Lemarchand, 1996). Belgium chose to rely on the Tutsi minority to govern, leaving the other two ethnic groups in subordinate positions (Reyntjens, 1995) and it later reinvented the history of the Tutsis by attributing them a Nilotic origin (Chrétien & Kabada, 2013). Burundi's traditional organization was thus weakened and distorted (Gahama, 2001).

In addition, Belgian colonial authorities chose to establish an indirect administration structure in Burundi, forcing former chiefs to manage lands according to a discriminatory customary law (Decree of the Sovereign King, September 14, 1886). Thus, the choice to establish a legal dualism (to govern indigenous lands by customary law and white settlers' lands by Belgian law) had the consequence of preserving a system of access to land based on several informal criteria of belonging, situation, status, and relationships. This allowed the institution of Ubugererwa to be maintained, institutionalizing inequality in access to land for the Burundi. The institution was further strengthened by the Belgian administration's decision to give preference to Tutsis, the only ones who, with a few exceptions, were able to study or find a job in the administration. This greatly contributed to the fact that Hutus and Batwa made up the bulk of Abagererwa. The Congo's General Administrator's Order of July 1, 1885 had two specific consequences for Burundi. Firstly, the order granted the maîtres des fonds (Masters of Funds) legal ownership of the land inhabited and cultivated by the Abagererwa. Secondly, it made the legal procedure for acquiring land compulsory, thereby significantly reducing the advancement of uneducated Hutus and Batwa who were unaware of these procedures.

Several factors, including UN pressure on Belgium, enabled the Burundians to elect their own leaders as early as 1961.

They chose the Unity for National Progress (UPRONA) and Prince Louis Rwagasore, who won the legislative elections, as head of government. However, Prince Rwagasore was assassinated in October 1961 as he set Burundi on the road to independence, which the Kingdom of Burundi achieved on July 1, 1962 (Acquier, 1986).

Rwanda

For many years, Rwanda remained a terra incognita for Westerners. For over 174 years, it remained inaccessible to Arab merchants, who repeatedly sought to establish commercial relations with Rwandans (Lugan, 1980: 209). The fact that Rwanda had not been subjected to colonial rule made it a region shrouded in legend in the eyes of Europeans and Arab merchants. It was described as a “mysterious, powerful kingdom, inhabited by men of unknown origins and hostile to any foreign intrusion; a land of mysteries and dangers where foreigners are regarded as undesirable” (Byanafashe, Rutayisir, 2011: 174).

In 1885, during the Berlin Conference, Rwanda was allotted to the Germans. That same year, the explorer Stanley set off on his expedition and he was the first to set foot on Rwandan soil. But he was met with hostility from locals and immediately turned back. The Germans finally withdrew from the Great Lakes region in 1916 following attack by the Belgians. After this defeat, the League of Nations signed a treaty in 1924 granting Belgium trusteeship of Ruanda-Urundi, which thus became attached to the Belgian Congo. The Belgians succeeded in maintaining Rwanda's traditional monarchy, but completely distorted it (Lemarchand, 1970). District administration was abolished, the system of tax and levy was largely abolished, and the Catholic religion spread massively, converting the population while providing care and education (Ibid.). The ideology guiding colonial actions in Rwanda was “divide and dominate” and “dominate and exploit” (Byanafashe, Rutayisir, 2011: 173). Taxes and forced labor were the primary means used by Belgian colonizers to dominate, exploit and affect the living conditions of Rwandans (Ibid.).

Over merely 60 years, this colonial domination, accompanied by racial theories, disrupted every aspect of Rwandan identity (Ibid.). Racial classifications became official in 1931, with Tutsi and Hutu becoming more of a criterion for ethnic or racial discrimination. Tutsi were attributed a Nilotic origin, distinguished by their tall stature and fine features, making them closer to Europeans. They were also identified with members of the royal family because they were cattle owners (Lugan, 1980). Hutu, on the other hand, were identified with “thick-lipped, flat-nosed Negroes, the poor people, the subjugated” (Ibid.). Tutsi were thus regarded as a superior race, favored over Hutu and, with Belgium's authorization, they were entrusted with managing the country (Newbury, 1988).

In 1957, Hutu demonstrated their discontent. With the support of the Catholic Church, particularly Swiss-



born Archbishop Perraudin, they published a manifesto denouncing the political monopoly held by the Tutsi (Ntamabyaliro, 2011). This manifesto triggered a Hutu revolt in 1959, which resulted in thousands of deaths and looting, and resulted in the exile of many Tutsi and Hutu to neighboring countries. In response to this uprising, Belgium reversed its allegiances and allied with the Hutu instead (Newbury, 1988). The legislative elections organized in January 1961, under UN observation, proclaimed Grégoire Kayibanda, a Hutu, as President of Rwanda. He led the country to independence on July 1, 1962.

04

Colonial crimes and the denial of black humanity

Colonial crimes have left a deep mark on collective memory in Africa's Great Lakes region. This memory has been fed by historical discourses, memorial practices, colonial institutions and architecture, all of which serve as constant reminders of the violence of colonialism in this region. The national anthem Burundi bwacu, for example, serves as a reminder that the Burundian nation was reborn after the ravages of colonialism by recovering its sovereignty in an act of pride. The anthem reads:

*Our Burundi, prosperous Burundi
Take your place in the concert of nations
And build Man according to your justice.
Bruised you have been,
Ill-treated, serene you have remained,
Proudly you rise and proclaim your sovereignty,
You rise to the rank of free nations (...).
Rise and sing of your glory and your newfound freedom.
Shout your joy, you have defeated your oppressor
(...)*

In the case of the DRC, Lumumba's speech, known to all Congolese and famous throughout Africa, is a good example of how colonization stands for a biopolitics of violence; a violent reorganization of Black people's lives that is fundamentally characterized by racial hierarchy. To emerge from colonization is both a source of pride and the death knell of humiliation, heralding the advent of a nation. The speech reads:

"(...) The wounds of 80 years of colonial rule are still too fresh and too painful to banish from our memory. (...) We have known the ironies, the insults, the blows we had to endure morning, noon and night, because we were Negroes. (...) We have known our lands plundered in the name of supposedly legal texts, which only recognized the right of the strongest; we have known that the law was never the same, depending on whether we were white or Black, accommodating for some, cruel and inhuman. We have known the atrocious suffering of those put away for their political opinions or their religious beliefs (...). Who can forget the shootings in which so many of our brothers perished, or the dark cells where those who refused to submit to a regime of injustice were brutally thrown? All that, my brothers (...), we tell you, is now over (...)"

In Rwanda, we recall the popular songs of musician and storyteller Joseph Bizuru, well known in the Rwandan countryside since the 1950s. With humor and mockery, he sang of the way in which colonial violence destroyed Rwandan society, leading eventually to the genocide against the Tutsi that Rwanda experienced in 1994. Consider the following excerpt:

*They gathered their rifles, which they called battle bows,
They gathered (rifle) bullets, which they called their arrows,
They gathered (bullet) casings, which they called arrow barrels,
They gathered bayonets, which they called their quivers,
They gathered other bayonets, which they called their swords (...).
Oh then, the wicked one, cause of misfortunes, who does not hesitate to harm!
Who came to impoverish people, let's start with the Mutara where he came from, Mr. Gafurama became aware of it, while sitting in Gabiro, Immediately, he wrote a letter, placed it in an envelope, Entrusted it to the post office and asked that it be taken to Kibungo,
and that it be handed to Dereva. The letter said:
"Disenti is with you,
Hurry up and help me, the [evil]-body-lying-(on-the-ground) has come this way."*

These examples, which are numerous in the region, explain why the memory of colonial crimes is still very much alive in Great Lakes Africa. These crimes have always been denounced in Africa's Great Lakes region by actors on all sides, whether from the state or civil society. Although these denunciations are not always formulated in terms of demands, they do include actors who have been calling for repair since the 1960s. Following independence, what was at stake was not primarily reparation in the strict legal sense, i.e. understood as "legal, moral, material, cultural or symbolic arrangements put in place to compensate a social group or its descendants, individually or collectively, for large-scale damage" (Louis-Georges, 2013). What was at stake had more to do with restitution.

In the Congo, for example, the contentieux belgo-congolais or Belgian-Congolese dispute was an episode in negotiations between the governments of the two countries concerning their disputes over the transmission of heritage and the management of the former Belgian Congo's debt. The 1960 negotiations, which had been interrupted by the "Congolese Crisis" following independence, resumed in Brussels on February 15, 1963, between the governments of Cyrille Adoula and Théo Lefèvre. Negotiations did not end until two years later, with the February 6, 1965 convention, which, among other things, definitively set the terms for the distribution of the Belgian Congo's debt and the allocation of portfolios to the new state. This report left a great

deal of unfinished business in the DRC, in that it left the new Congolese State responsible for the economic and financial conditions it had inherited. Not only would the new Congolese State be responsible for the debt contracted by the “colonial state,” but it would also owe Belgium its assets (its wealth). The conclusion of this pernicious reasoning is as follows: Belgium neither intends to pay for the debt of its former colony, nor does it intend to let the Congolese State recover all the assets of the colonial “state” in the companies in which the state was the majority shareholder.

The report’s conclusions left the Great Lakes region with the certainty that the configuration of international power relations would not allow for just reparation. But this did not stop the Congolese State from pursuing initiatives aimed at reparation, even if it had to do so unilaterally. In 1966, the Congolese government decided to take back mining concessions granted during the colonial era. In Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC, there was much political discourse on the evils of colonization, their continuity in the colonial period and the need to put an end to them. This rhetoric was strongly influenced by socialist and communist discourse in the sub-region, even when the region’s leaders were closer to the Western bloc.

Below is a table that defines the essential crimes of slavery and colonization that emerged from our interviews with civil society organizations in the region regarding this long history:

Crimes
<p>Physical damage Assassinations: <i>murders of national heroes and resistance fighters against slavery and colonization</i> Torture and trauma: <i>whipping, mutilations, severed hands</i> Imprisonments: <i>illegal imprisonments to promote loyalty to the colonial system</i> Deportations: <i>deposition of traditional chiefs, deportation of people for work, forced enrollment in various institutions</i></p>
<p>Human trafficking Slave deportation: <i>particularly in the DRC</i> Rape of women: <i>with or without pregnancy, occasional or with cohabitation</i> Deportation of mixed-race children: <i>harms to families, parents, and children</i> Abandoning mixed-race children: <i>harms to families, parents, and children</i></p>
<p>Material harms Seizure of natural resources: <i>by churches, businesses, and private individuals</i> Exclusion from public space: <i>apartheid, restricted movement</i> Exclusion from education: <i>apartheid, maintaining lack of formal education</i> Exclusion from employment: <i>apartheid, exploitation</i></p>

<p>Plunder Pillage of artefacts: <i>by private individuals, museums, and the colonizing state</i> Looting of other cultural goods: <i>by private individuals, museums, and the colonizing state</i></p>
<p>Theft and fraud Archive theft: <i>national archives and those of various organizations and companies</i> Body snatching and ancestral relics: <i>stolen Black bodies taken in various ways</i> Imposition of debt: <i>so-called “odious” debt</i></p>
<p>Historical memory Denial of history: <i>a questionable interpretation of colonial history and slavery</i> Misremembrance and rewriting of history to blame the colonized: <i>the question of Black intermediaries to clear the colonial system of blame</i> Misremembrance of important sites: <i>architecture, territories, and spaces symbolizing colonization</i></p>
<p>Immaterial damage Humiliation: <i>cultivating an inferiority complex among the colonized</i> Acculturation and alienation: <i>denigration of African cultures and imposition of colonial culture</i> Other acts of dehumanization: <i>various forms of exclusion, subordination, etc.</i> Disorders and illnesses: <i>psychological disorders, psychiatric illnesses</i> Exclusion from education: <i>political will to deny the colonized formal education</i></p>
<p>Ongoing damage Neo-colonialism: <i>ongoing economic and political influence; conditionalities</i> Odious debts: <i>colonial debt, dictatorship debt, and current measures</i> Perpetuating dependency: <i>political, economic, and symbolic</i> Sociopolitical consequences: <i>ethnicity, genocide, etc.</i> Problematic institutional legacies: <i>divisions, cultural losses</i></p>

This list shows the scale of colonial violence. It also raises questions about legal discourse, namely regarding the qualification of such violence. In other words, what is at stake in the struggle for reparations is also whether the formerly colonized will be able to challenge how former metropolises impose their vision of colonial history through the imposition of a legal language that partially constrains victims’ expressions and experiences of colonial violence. This issue not only relates to the domination of international law by former colonizers, but also to Euro-Western hegemony more broadly.

05

Restoring dignity through reparation

According to the organizations we spoke to, the consequences of the suffering and humiliation colonization brought about still weigh heavily on communities, peoples, and states today. The acts of violence and cruelty committed by colonizers are still vivid in the collective memory of colonized peoples, who are in need of reparation. Below, we lay out (i) formulated demands and targets for each country; (ii) modalities around demands; (iii) strengths/opportunities and weaknesses/challenges behind these modalities.

Demands and targets

In the Great Lakes region of Africa, the demands identified during our interviews take a variety of forms and revolve around the following key terms: knowing, restoring, learning, remembering, repairing, and rendering justice.

In the DRC

In the DRC, demands channel the legitimate indignation provoked by colonial crimes and aim to prevent present and future generations from forgetting the past.



An example from the DRC Non-violence alert (NOVA)

Non-Violence Alert is a human rights organization (NPO) working on non-violence, promoting reconciliation and restoring victims' rights. Since 2013, the organization has been working on crimes of slavery and colonial crimes. It seeks to promote symbolic and unconditional recognition of colonial crimes committed in Africa and the transmission of victims' memory. It is also involved in a capacity-building program including training courses on history and colonial crimes. It seeks to promote the articulation of available written archives with other sources, notably oral, as well as archaeological knowledge accumulated in territories that experienced slavery and colonization.

The organization has developed an advocacy program to encourage states such as Belgium, France, the United States, the Netherlands, and England, the main perpetrators of colonization and the slave trade, to undertake reparation measures. It seeks to facilitate this process at the international level through semi-public organizations such as UNESCO and the African Union. Its demands are targeting primarily the states responsible for colonial crimes, by mobilizing collective conscience through the media. It is currently studying the possibility of taking legal action to obtain damages. The organization is also seeking collaborations with structures in Rwanda and Burundi to have a greater impact on these issues.

But the organization faces several challenges, including insufficient documentation, insufficient financial resources to support the initiative, lack of proper planning due to a lack of appropriate expertise, lack of political will to support initiatives in this sector, and lack of resources to support stakeholders. More specifically, the organization faces a funding problem linked to the fact that traditional partners who support civil society organizations working on human rights and reparations issues are not interested in reparations for colonial crimes and slavery. The organization mobilizes resources mainly from its members through membership fees. Although insufficient, these inadequate resources enable it to work on systematic and thematic documentation, research, and awareness-raising activities via the media, colloquia, and seminars on the denunciation of violence tied to slavery and colonization.

Demands	Targets
Recognition <i>Recognition of colonial violence and apology</i>	Belgium
Recognition <i>Return of cultural property</i> <i>Restitution of relics and ancestors' remains</i> <i>Return of national archives</i>	Belgium, Western museums
Knowledge <i>Construction of the Maison de mémoire coloniale et de l'esclavage (House of Colonial Memory and Slavery)</i>	
<i>Making connections between written archives and other sources, especially oral sources, as well as archaeological knowledge accumulated in territories where slavery was practiced</i>	
Education <i>Development of an educational program on the slave trade, slavery and colonization</i> <i>Passing on the memory of victims</i> <i>Teaching about colonial continuity and endurance</i>	DRC & Belgium DRC
Places of memory <i>Rehabilitation of slave market sites (Nyangwe, Nsiya-Mfumu)</i> <i>Rehabilitation and construction of destroyed cultural villages</i>	DRC, Western museums
Capacity building <i>Institutional capacity-building on the subject of reparations</i> <i>Raising awareness on the consequences, continuity and endurance of colonialism and new forms of colonialism</i>	DRC
Development <i>A development program for indigenous populations</i> <i>Technology transfer</i> <i>Cancellation of all debt</i>	DRC
Justice <i>Actions to establish paternity of mixed-race children</i>	Belgium
<i>Compensation for mixed-race children and their parents who suffered harms during the colonial period</i>	
<i>Restitution: return of artefacts, archives and human remains stolen/taken/plundered during the colonial period</i>	
<i>Recognition of crimes and compensation</i>	
<i>Prosecuting not only the Belgian State, but also companies, banks, individuals and/or their heirs</i>	

Burundi

For Burundi, the question of reparation for colonial crimes is more a question of justice and history in view of establishing the truth. Such work has already been undertaken by a group of experts (historians, anthropologists) appointed by the Burundian Senate. There have also been talks on the Belgian colonial past in Burundi between a delegation of Belgian parliamentarians and the Burundian Parliament.²

An example from Burundi Impunity Watch Burundi

Impunity Watch Burundi is a Burundian civil society organization that pledges to deal with the past in a bottom-up approach, contributing to the restoration of social cohesion in communities, and listening to the needs of victims and communities in general, focusing on those of women and young people in particular. More broadly, it works on “access to justice and the rule of law.” Impunity Watch Burundi, as an organization that believes that civil society should play a moderating role in addressing Burundi’s colonial past, is the perfect example of an organization that, without necessarily working directly on this issue, has a clear and coherent vision of what civil society’s role could be. Impunity Watch Burundi believes that there are two reasons why civil society should act as the interface between those countries responsible for colonial crimes and formerly colonized countries. Firstly, as a partner of the government, civil society is consensual and legitimate within the population and the most marginalized social groups. Thus, it can take a bottom-up approach to reparation that is both legitimate and inclusive. On the other hand, acting as a safeguard of government action, civil society can ensure that the government does not deviate from its mission of representing the interests of all Burundians in the reparation process. Indeed, the role of civil society is to monitor government action in this area, and to relay the recommendations of local populations.

Impunity Watch Burundi believes that there are several prerequisites for it to be able to play this role: first, civil society must have precise knowledge of its country’s colonial past and the debates surrounding this issue before it can really play its part. Moreover, an enormous amount of work has already been done by a group of experts appointed by the Burundian Senate. There have also been talks on Belgium’s colonial past in Burundi between a delegation of Belgian parliamentarians and the Burundian Parliament. Civil society must take ownership of these issues and assess the general interest and legitimacy in light of the diversity of the Burundian population. Finally, civil society needs to gain knowledge on the strategic aspects of these reparation issues: What are the crimes? Who are the perpetrators? What are the claims? What are the



productive strategies? Where are the local relays? Who to build alliance with? What actions are appropriate and legitimate? etc.

Once equipped, civil society can play its part. But it must first get acquainted with the issue and raise awareness among the relevant players at the national and international level. According to Impunity Watch Burundi, there is an urgent need to create the opportunity to talk about Burundi’s colonial past, to channel information upwards (towards the state, the sub-region, and the international level more generally) and downwards (towards the local population). They believe that before talking about reparations, it is necessary to first learn more about the colonial past and the crimes committed, and to demand recognition of these crimes by the former colonial power. Once this has been done, it will be possible to negotiate an agreement on reparations which, whether pecuniary or not, would consist of precise commitments over a given period of time. Specifically, Burundian civil society will have to keep a watchful eye on the colonial past to prevent it from being exploited by regimes in formerly colonized countries that may be eager to remain in power. One of civil society’s greatest tasks is to ensure that the issue of reparation for colonial crimes and slavery is not limited to interactions between governments. But, that it first and foremost involves proceedings intended for the populations that have been paying the price for this violent history for far too long.

Demands	Targets
Acknowledge Belgium's involvement in the assassination of Burundi's national hero, Prince Rwagasore Louis	Belgium
Obtain apologies from Germany and Belgium	Belgium and Germany
Consider financial compensation for violence, plunder, appropriation and destruction	
Repatriate Burundi's archives	
Support the country's economic policies, with financial support as reparation	
Recognize the colonial mode of government based on "Divide and Rule"	
Demand financial compensation	
Teach history and the evils of colonization	Burundi
Deconstruct the ethnicization of Burundian society	
Deconstruct colonial institutions	
Make an inventory of the various forms of pillage and demand compensation for the damage caused (acculturation, forced labor in mines and plantations, humiliation, displacement of populations, imposition of illegitimate authorities, etc.)	

Rwanda

The role of civil society is crucial to the work of addressing the colonial past. However, we must recognize that the opening and closing of political spaces can have an impact on civil society’s ability to get involved in these debates. Civil society could, for example, inform the population about processes underway, make people’s demands heard, try to ensure that the process is not co-opted by politicians, and influence the agenda and the prioritization of people’s claims for reparations. This is one vision that came across strongly in Rwanda, where civil society made the following demands:

An example from Rwanda Association for mixed-race people in Rwanda

The Association des Métis au Rwanda is an organization of mixed-race children born to Rwandan women and foreign fathers who, while in Rwanda, met Rwandan girls and women and had consensual sexual relations or, in some cases, committed sexual assaults that led to the birth of mixed-race children. In most cases, the fathers did not recognize their children, or the children were born after the fathers had already left Rwanda. Single mothers were then abandoned and rejected by their families, and these biracial children were born in precarious conditions. The association aims to promote the well-being of these children. It seeks to defend them, restore their identity, and help them reintegrate into society, offering them educational opportunities and improving the social well-being of the mothers through various welfare and empowerment programs.

In this case, two interesting elements are to be highlighted: (i) the continuity of the challenge posed by children born of interracial unions in the postcolonial period shows the reconfiguration of this issue after independence, and (ii) its transnational nature makes it impossible to talk about reparation for the colonial past in a state-centric perspective. Regarding the continuity of the debate around mixed-race children, we note that, similar to the colonial period - and because of the taboo that surrounded the treatment of mixed-race children during the colonial period - many did not break away from the idea that these children were a major problem. During the Belgian colonial period, between 12,000 and 20,000 mixed-race children were sent to the Belgian Congo, but also to the Belgian colonial mandates of Rwanda and Burundi. At the time, they were called “mulattoes”, “métis”, “children of sin”, etc. They were often regarded as the accidental results of affairs between whites and Blacks that should not have happened, and, as a result, they were abandoned with impunity. According to the Association des métis in Rwanda, this history is still repeating itself today. For this reason, it is important to raise awareness on the issue in order to put an end to the racist history that is at the root of so much violence.

As for the transnational dimension of the issue, we know that mixed-race children were stolen from their mothers in the Great Lakes region by the Belgian colonial state at the end of the colonial period, between 1959 and 1962. Some Belgian mixed-race children were also repatriated to Belgium in 1960 as “refugees,” often without their mothers, some were born in Belgium during the colonial period, and many remained in Africa, in African families, after independence. In the post-colonial period, mixed-race children lived between two continents, and those who were abandoned lived in Africa but had roots elsewhere. It is for this reason that mixed-race associations in Rwanda, Belgium, Burundi and the DRC maintain ties, and do not allow the “mixed-race question” to be addressed solely from the point of view of a single African country. In this context, struggles for reparation can only be considered transnationally, without losing sight of the various geographical, cultural, legal, and other complexities of the issue.

Demands	Targets
Apologies	Belgium and Germany
Move beyond apologies to real reparations	
Move away from neo-colonialism and towards mutually beneficial reparations	
Return Rwandan archives	
Return Rwanda's cultural heritage	
Give people of African descent from Africa's Great Lakes region preferential treatment in Belgium and Germany, e.g. in terms of visas, scholarships, etc.	
Compensate mixed-race children and their parents who suffered harms during the colonial period	
Recognize the link between colonization and genocide and consider reparation	
Be accountable for colonization's share of responsibility for the genocide	
Teach the full scale and scope of colonial history and its consequences	Civil society and government
Address these crimes systematically	

Modalities around the claims

Claims are being made in many arenas, and their success is not only a matter of justice. It also raises the question of the political work that must precede reparations and of what can render these efforts most effective: in other words, questions of resources, alliances and synergies.

Demands	Resources	Allies/Synergies
To date, most claims have been made in the media.	Most organizations suffer from a lack of available resources, whether in terms of finances or knowledge. Donors don't want to commit to this issue. Organizations must make do with what is available. Unfortunately, as a result, most organizations interested in working on this topic simply do not.	In some cases, civil society organizations in the DRC have formed alliances around events such as the visit of the Belgian king. Yet, these alliances are only circumstantial. We have also found instances of civil society/ state or civil society/UN alliances in Burundi, for example.
State administrative arena: In some cases, demands were brought to the attention of quite a few authorities of the former colonial power, e.g. the Belgian government and the Belgian embassy.	Here again, resources are very limited, and organizations are working on their own funds, which significantly limits both the ambitions and the potential campaigns that might be considered by civil society organizations.	In the DRC, for example, we have seen how demands made to the authorities of the former colonial power have mobilized civil society. But forging alliances on this topic with partners with whom they usually cooperate on human rights issues and reparation for crimes has proven difficult due to the sensitivity of these issues in countries of the North.

Lawsuit by mixed-race women against the Belgian State		
	It is important to study in greater depth how this complaint was filled, the means used, and the alliances and synergies that made it possible.	

These points are developed in the table below: The study of resources, alliances and synergies in the fight for reparation for the crimes of slavery and colonialism in Africa's Great Lakes region reveals a need to support civil society organizations so that they can better accomplish their mission on the matter. According to the organizations we worked with, one of the main challenges is the lack of interest from the technical and financial partners who usually support them. Given the thematic areas of focus in bilateral or multilateral cooperation, which are determined politically in the North, they prefer to focus on post-colonial crimes.

Conclusion and recommendations

Strengths and Opportunities vs. Weaknesses and Challenges

Civil society organizations identified a number of strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and challenges in addressing reparations for the crimes of slavery and colonization. We summarize below the points most frequently raised during our discussions:

Strengths/Opportunities	Weaknesses/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presence of organizations concerned with reparation in Africa's Great Lakes region - "Willingness" to change the narrative about colonial history in the region's national educational programs - Proven expertise, mainly in North and West Africa, on the issue of colonial crimes and reparations - Clear understanding by civil society organizations in the Great Lakes region of the cultural environment in which reparation issues can be discussed - Inventory of slavery sites available for commemoration - Open avenues of reflection on the question of colonial crimes - The UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a sectorial strategy in Great Lakes countries - Lack of political will for meaningful reparation by formerly colonized states and resistance from certain colonizing states - No general inventory of tangible and intangible heritage - No strategy in the countries of the Great Lakes region for the restitution of cultural property held in foreign collections - Non-compliance of formerly colonized states with international commitments - Conflicts between the countries of Africa's Great Lakes region prevent collaboration on this issue - The system of education remains colonized when it comes to the subject of colonial memory - Mimicry of an education system that falsifies the

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Countries of Origin Willingness of African Great Lakes states to demand reparations - even if they doubt the genuine political will of colonizing countries to address reparations - Availability of archives establishing crimes and identifying perpetrators - Increasing recognition of these crimes worldwide - Liberalization of debates on the restitution of cultural property - Possibility of dispossessed peoples appropriating these claims for justice - Collective awareness of the consequences of colonial crimes and slavery - Expressions of guilt on the part of certain states responsible for these crimes - Current events that are consequences of colonial crimes - Existing cooperation between activists in Africa's Great Lakes region and in former metropolises for carrying out reparations - Existing cooperation frameworks and North-South dialogues on the colonial past - Factual and advanced cases such as compensation figures estimated by the Burundian Senate, complaints by mixed-race people, repatriation of works of art, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - true historical narrative for public policy purposes - Lack of clear commitment from Rwandan and Congolese governments - Lack of effective partnerships to boost remembrance and reparation policies - Lack of resources to support the training of stakeholders and the implementation of studies - Lack of public awareness of colonial crimes and slavery - Lack of partnership and synergy on reparation issues within civil society and formerly colonized states - The lifespan of the facts, which would prevent an accurate study of the consequences of colonization - Sources of information on certain periods are also a challenge, as the history recording in archives is the work of the colonists (the perpetrators in this case). - Speculations by some Great Lakes leaders about financial reparation despite mismanagement of public funds - Traces and witnesses of certain crimes have already disappeared, making it difficult to investigate all the crimes of the colonial period
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of an international legal framework for the reparation process that is anchored in African perspectives - International conflicts - Formulating a reparation policy in the country that suffered colonization - Transnational nature of compensation issues, which are often dealt with only at state level
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- Restore the education system and correct the distortion it underwent during colonization;
- Work at various levels (government, civil society, intellectuals, etc.) to establish responsibility and define the damage (moral, cultural, material, and symbolic) caused by colonization;
- Establish a sectorial policy on reparations in each country and let civil society play a moderating role, acting as a social relay;

To civil society actors

- Civil society members should start by learning about their country's colonial past, so that they can play a key educational and advocacy role with populations and states;
- Civil society needs to be strengthened so that it can play its role in pushing the government to work on this issue. It must enlighten, influence, and also accompany the government in its decision-making process;
- In terms of raising awareness, civil society can also work on the social outcomes of colonization and decolonization, a subject that has never been dealt with in depth in schools, debates, or the media;
- Civil society organizations should set up initiatives to seek out and make public the truth about human rights violations and other forms of abuse under colonization and during slavery;
- Civil society organizations must participate in the documentation of colonial history and should try to keep its neutrality in relation to the political agendas of governments.
- Civil society organizations must help the population to participate in addressing the colonial past by making citizens' needs and opinions known. They should also keep citizens informed of all steps taken to deal with the colonial past;
- Civil society must monitor the government's actions in this process to ensure it does not deviate from its mission to represent the interests of the populations that heirs to the colonial past;
- Civil society should complement the government in the formulation of recommendations within the scope of their different areas of intervention.

We see here the need to support civil society organizations so that they can play their role of not only challenging former metropolises, which must repair, but also their own respective governments, whose priorities in the reparations process are not always those of the people. The necessary support is multifaceted: it should strengthen civil society's knowledge, networks, advocacy, and lobbying actions for reparation. It should also strengthen its legitimacy with stakeholders and the populations it represents. Resistance from former metropolises is strong, and former colonized countries are in a weak position because they are still dependent on the former. This situation only reinforces the fact that civil society, which has the privilege of being subject to less pressure than the states in the North, must play a crucial role.

Fortunately, civil society organizations can work from a series of strengths/opportunities at their disposal: a multiplicity of organizations interested in the issue, a network to share the work, legitimacy before various stakeholders, etc. From such a base, civil society actors can build an appropriate working strategy and an effective network for advancing the fight for reparations.

Recommendations

The organizations we spoke to formulated a series of recommendations, some of which are listed below:

To the States

- Hold direct dialogues with affected populations/communities to ensure the legitimacy of claims;
- Promote exchanges between African intellectuals and other formerly colonized peoples for inspiration on reparation issues;

For civil society organizations in the African Great Lakes region, there are at least four elements that require our attention in addressing colonial crimes and slavery: 1) Civil

society organizations must be considered and recognized as the central actors, for their legitimacy, neutrality, and their role as guardians of the common interest. 2) Civil society organizations' work needs to be backed up by enhanced knowledge on the issue through, for example, a strong network, both internally (with local populations) and externally (across Africa and with diasporas). 3) Civil society must be able to put forward proposals for redress and serve as a relay for actors at the local level and the least powerful actors. 4) Civil society must play a watchdog role and monitor government action on reparations for colonial crimes.

Endnotes

1 Editor's note: For more on this case, see the forthcoming African Futures Lab report on reparations demands by mixed-race people in Belgium, DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda who, as children, were abducted from their children by the Belgian colonial state.

2 In July 2018, the Burundian Parliament stressed the need to seek reparation for the colonial crimes suffered by Burundi. In the same year, the Burundian Senate appointed a group of experts including historians and anthropologists to assess the impact of colonialism. Following this work, the Burundian authorities requested compensation, citing the "forced labor and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments," such as whipping and imprisonment, inflicted on the population during the colonial period. Burundi has asked for apologies and a financial compensation of 43 billion dollars for the wrongs caused by German and Belgian colonialists between 1896 and 1962. For the Burundian government, the fact that Burundi is today one of the world's poorest countries is also due to the political and ethnic violence that has marked its history for over sixty years, and which can be explained by the ethnicization and hierarchization of Burundian society by the colonial regime.

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