

Social Protection, Conflict, and Reparations

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Outline

Introduction

How Conflict Affects Communities and Individuals

The Effects of SP in FCS and on Conflict Victims

Reparations

Recent decades have seen a deterioration in global safety and security

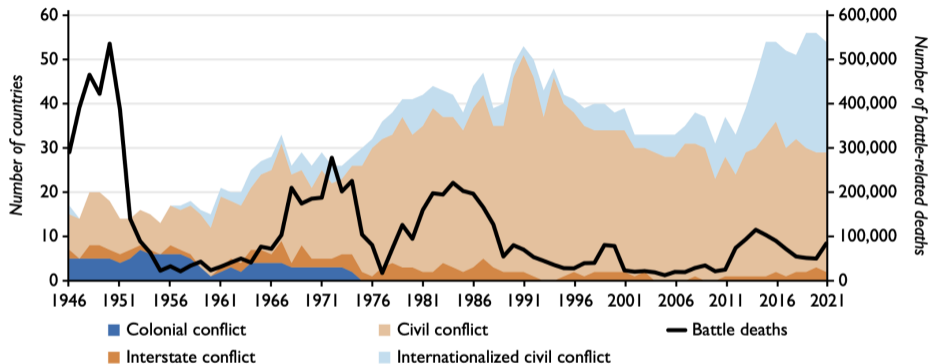
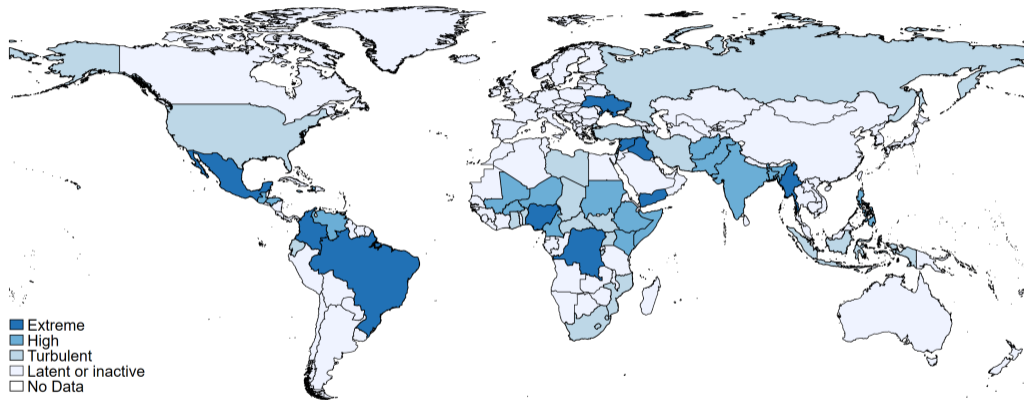


Figure 1: Conflict events worldwide, 1946-2021, figure reproduced from Palik, Anna Marie Obermeier, and Siri Aas Rustad (2022).

Conflicts are expected to escalate due to climate change (Burke et al. '24)

Countries with high levels of conflict are more likely to be poor

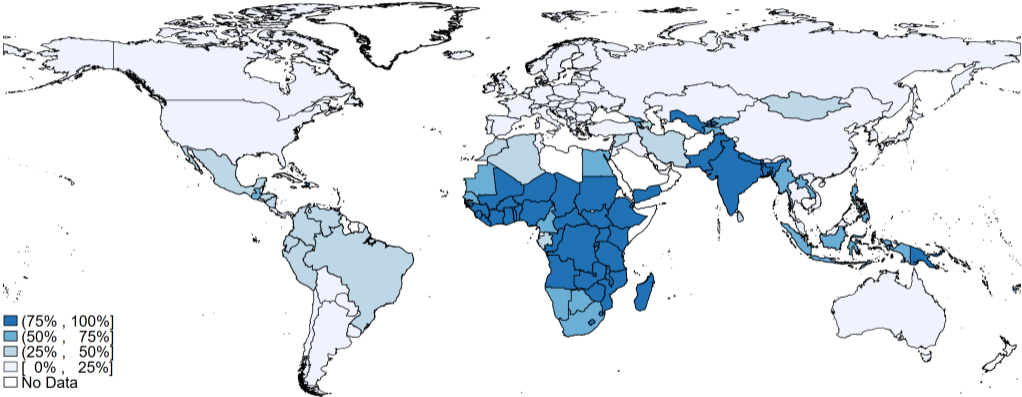
Conflict Severity Index



Note: This figure displays the geographic distribution of the Conflict Severity Index category from the 2023 version of the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) project, first introduced by Raleigh et al. (2010). Countries with a higher index face the most severe and complex conflicts based on their deadliness, danger, diffusion, and fragmentation.

Countries with high levels of conflict are more likely to be poor

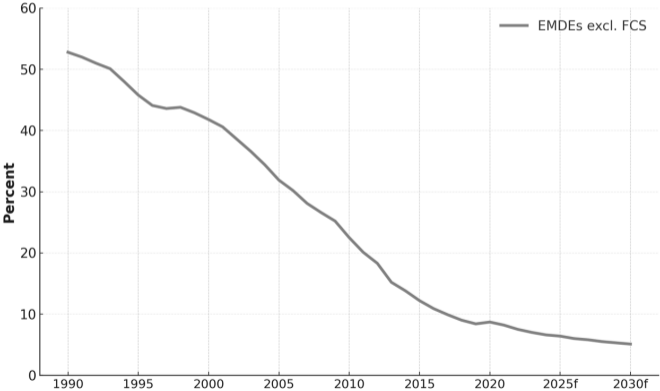
Poverty Rate



Note: This figure plots the latest country-level poverty headcount ratio at \$6.85 a day (2017 PPP) from the World Development Indicators.

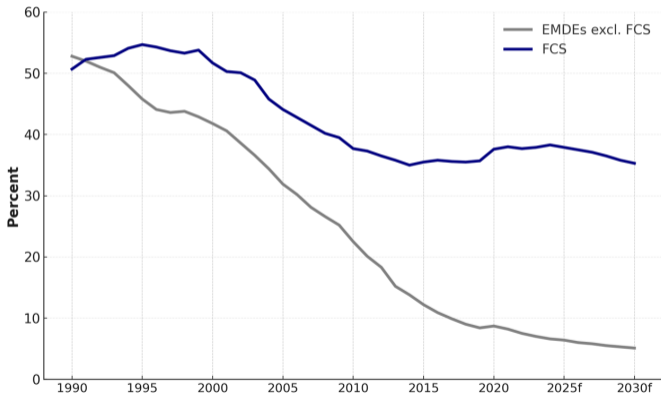
Extreme poverty in more stable Emerging and Developing Economies has fallen sharply

Extreme Poverty in EMDEs

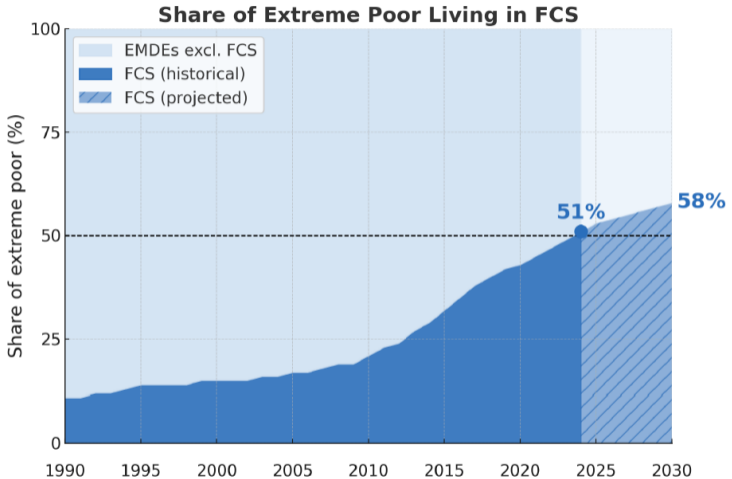


Fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS) have the world's highest poverty rates and the slowest poverty reduction

Extreme Poverty



Ending global poverty requires ending poverty in FCS



Source: Hill, Khadan & Selcuk (2025); data from Mahler, Yonzan & Lakner (2022) and World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform (database).

Conflict challenges peace, stability, and poverty-reduction efforts

- ▶ With fragility increasing and international aid shrinking, learning to be more effective in FCS is not optional—it is a necessity

- ⇒ Need to research and implement effective SP measures aimed at preventing conflict, protecting affected individuals, and aiding their recovery from atrocities

What we'll learn today

- ▶ Why recent trends in conflict occurrence mean that scholars and policymakers committed to eradicating global poverty must pay attention to the complexities of FCS
- ▶ How implementing social protection (SP) measures in FCS poses unique challenges; how SP can have varying impacts on individuals in FCS
- ▶ Reparation as a tangible, victim-centric tool for transitioning from conflict to peace

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How conflict affects communities

- ▶ Conflict damages existing infrastructure and raises the cost of building new infrastructure Collier et al. '16
- ▶ It increases uncertainty and trade-related expenses and distorts investment and economic activity Amodio & Maio '17; Arias et al. '19
- ▶ Conflict weakens institutions, governance, state capacity, markets and production Cerra & Saxena '08

How conflict affects individuals

- ▶ Conflict victims experience forced displacement and lose homes, assets and livelihoods
- ▶ Many endure violent loss of family members and serious human rights abuses such as rape, torture and landmine injuries Ibáñez & Moya '10; Sikkink et al. '15
- ▶ Conflict causes long-term losses in physical, human and social capital; education and livelihoods are disrupted Chamarbagwala & Morán '11; Akresh et al. '12; Camacho '08
- ▶ Survivors face severe psychological trauma, discrimination and stigma; many report psychological, material, moral, physical and social losses De Jong '02; Chiovelli et al. '21; Sikkink et al. '15

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- Preventing or Mitigating Conflict

- Economic Well-Being, Social Cohesion, and Mental Health

- Nonstandard SP Measures to Address Mental Health and Social Cohesion

Reparations

Implementation challenges in FCS

- ▶ Inadequate infrastructure and disrupted markets in conflict settings hinder the delivery of SP programs Moreno Sánchez et al. '19
- ▶ Weak property rights, limited resources and minimal state control constrain program reach and monitoring
- ▶ After conflict, forced displacement, social unrest and institutional disruptions prevent households from fully benefiting
- ▶ These disruptions undermine SP returns and hinder delivery to intended beneficiaries

Identification and data constraints

- ▶ Displacement and social unrest complicate data collection and survivor identification
Brune et al. '22; Corral et al. '20
- ▶ Limited data impedes targeting, registration and monitoring of conflict victims Brune et al. '22
- ▶ Data deficiencies hamper program evaluations and limit evidence on SP effectiveness
Jeong & Trako '22
- ▶ Traditional SP measures primarily target the poor, so their impacts on conflict victims may differ

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How SP influences conflict dynamics

- ▶ SP can reduce grievances and boost state legitimacy by addressing economic grievances Ghorpade '20
- ▶ Transfers and broader SP measures can enhance information flow and state capacity to counter rebel groups Berman et al. '11; Khanna & Zimmermann '17
- ▶ SP insures individuals against environmental shocks and increases the opportunity cost of joining rebel movements Gehring & Schaudt '23; Blattman & Annan '16; McGuirk & Burke '20; Miguel et al. '04
- ▶ Expansion of SP programs can provoke insurgent sabotage and may inadvertently fuel conflict Crost et al. '14; Ghorpade '20; Premand & Rohner '24; Sexton '16

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Economic well-being

- ▶ Cash and in-kind transfers improve short-term food consumption and security Aker '17; Kurdi '21
- ▶ Productive asset transfers and public works raise savings, assets and short-term employment but conflict reduces long-run returns Bedoya et al. '19; Brune et al. '22; Bagga et al. '23; Casey '18
- ▶ Gains beyond targeted outcomes are often unclear and tend to dissipate over time Blattman et al. '20; Brune et al. '22; Ibáñez & Moya '10
- ▶ SP provides essential relief but often cannot break intergenerational poverty cycles Ibáñez et al. '22

Social cohesion & mental health

- ▶ Cash transfers can build social capital and reduce marginalization but may also highlight group differences and intensify group loyalty Beltramo et al. '23
- ▶ Evidence on public works and CDR/D programs for social cohesion is limited and their effectiveness remains uncertain Bagga et al. '23; Casey '18
- ▶ Truth and reconciliation forums in Sierra Leone improved social capital and fostered forgiveness towards perpetrators Cilliers et al. '16
- ▶ Cash transfers improve mental health; employment yields larger mental and physical health benefits for displaced persons, while reconciliation ceremonies can exacerbate trauma and require sustained counseling Haushofer & Shapiro '16; McGuire et al. '22; Bedoya et al. '19; Quattrochi et al. '22; Hussam et al. '22; Cilliers et al. '16

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Nonstandard SP measures

- ▶ Parenting programs and psychosocial support improve children's mental health, maternal mental health, and early childhood development Annan et al. '17; Jensen '21; Sánchez et al. '23
- ▶ CBT reduces violent and illicit behavior among men involved in conflict Blattman et al. '17
- ▶ Educational programs that improve perspective-taking enhance social cohesion and reduce peer violence Alan et al. '21
- ▶ These interventions can help break intergenerational cycles of violence and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies

Bottom line

- ▶ Traditional SP measures may not fully address the multidimensional hardships of conflict victims
- ▶ Programs are most successful when tailored to victims' needs and challenges
- ▶ Effective SP in FCS requires understanding context-specific constraints and integrating economic, social and psychological support

Open questions and areas for future research

- ▶ What interventions can support victims' mental health and help break intergenerational cycles of trauma and violence?
- ▶ What are the complementarities and comparative advantages of different social protection measures in conflict-affected regions, especially when both supply and demand constraints are present?
- ▶ How can social protection programs be adapted to reach people facing imminent risks and help prevent severe welfare losses?
- ▶ How can programs be designed to mitigate tensions between recipients and nonrecipients, target triggers of conflict, and operate efficiently when conditions change quickly?
- ▶ How should reconciliation processes and related interventions be structured to reduce psychological costs and support recovery?

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Basic Principles, Tensions, and the Concept of Transformation

Logistical, Moral, and Political Challenges

Reviewing the Evidence on What Reparations Do for Victims

Reparations programs have been implemented in 30+ countries:

- ▶ Germany's reparations to Holocaust survivors,
- ▶ US reparations to Japanese Americans interned during World War II,
- ▶ South Africa's postapartheid reparations
- ▶ Postconflict countries such as Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Peru, El Salvador, Ireland, Indonesia, and Rwanda
- ▶ Postauthoritarian countries like Argentina, Brazil, and Chile

Reparations

- ▶ Reparations are close in form to SP, and they can interact with SP measures to promote social justice and broader development goals
- ▶ In their narrowest form, reparations are meant to acknowledge and address harms caused by the state or by its failure to prevent atrocities
 - ▶ Unlike assistance, reparations are addressed to victims' *harms*, not their *needs*
- ▶ However, experts in transitional justice argue that reparations can also pursue broader goals—fostering justice, supporting recovery, promoting reconciliation, and enabling economic development

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2005 U.N. “Basic Principles and Guidelines” on reparations

‘Integrally’ addressing the suffering endured by victims of gross human rights violations:

1. *Compensation* for harm suffered (e.g., physical or mental suffering, lost opportunities, material and moral damages, legal expenses)
2. *Restitution* to restore victims to their pre-violation condition (*restitutio in integrum*), including rights, property, and residence
3. *Rehabilitation* covering medical and psychological care, legal and social support
4. *Satisfaction* measures to halt ongoing violations, uncover truth, locate missing persons, issue public apologies, and conduct commemorations
5. *Guarantees of nonrepetition* actions to prevent future violations (e.g., reinforcing judicial independence)

A normative tension between *corrective* justice and *distributive* justice

- ▶ Reparation is straightforward when addressing isolated human rights violations, but becomes complex following large-scale violations in postconflict and transitional contexts, where societies often grapple with deep-rooted inequality and poverty
e.g., Many victims in Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, and El Salvador were already in vulnerable conditions or facing discrimination *before* their victimization
- ⇒ Simply applying the principle of *restitutio in integrum* would be unjust and counterproductive—it would restore victims to a state of poverty and discrimination while failing to address the underlying causes and consequences of conflict
- ▶ A normative tension arises between recognizing victims' rights by providing redress (*corrective* justice) and addressing socioeconomic inequality, poverty, and discrimination by offering victims a better life (*distributive* justice)

The concept of *transformative* justice

- ▶ Key idea: reparations should not only address specific violations and ongoing harm but also bring about lasting change by “transforming” the underlying conditions that allowed violations to occur Evans '21; Gready & Robins '14; Roht-Arriaza & Orlovsky '09
- ▶ It also helps bridge reparations programs and traditional SP policies in postconflict and transitional settings, where weak institutional capacity and budget constraints may make it difficult to develop both programs simultaneously Uprimny-Yepes '09
- ▶ “Transformative reparations” have gained recognition from institutions like the International Criminal Court and have been integrated into UN policies and operational guidelines

Example: Colombia's 2011 Victims' Law

- ▶ An ambitious reparations program: financial compensation, land restitution, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of nonrepetition—individual and collective; material, moral, and symbolic
- ▶ It aims to compensate 7+ million victims (e.g., forced displacement, homicide or disappearance), despite ongoing conflict between state, guerrillas, and paramilitaries
- E.g., Compensation is paid in lump sum with a personalized letter expressing remorse for human rights violation and encouraging victims to “transform” their life by investing it in homes, entrepreneurship, and children’s education
- ▶ Victims believe main goal of compensation is “life transformation” (52%)—above harm reparation (31%)—and 72% believe it contributed to their life transformation

- ▶ To realize their full transformative potential, reparations must be implemented appropriately and in coordination with social assistance
- ▶ Reparations and SP are often similar in form and ends, distributed through similar screening and implementation processes, and used in combination
- E.g., Colombia provides victims with humanitarian aid (e.g., food and monthly housing subsidies) to respond to their immediate needs as they wait for reparations, and deems this necessary for victims to fully benefit from reparations' transformative potential
- ▶ Depending on how reparations are used and communicated to victims, SP measures can detract from reparations' significance or increase their reach and impact

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Logistical, moral, and political challenges

- ▶ Uncertainties persist regarding the feasibility and operation details of transformative reparations programs Dixon '15; Dixon et al. '19

E.g., Should beneficiaries' material needs be considered alongside the severity of past abuses (e.g., Peru, Guatemala)? Should priority be given to vulnerable groups (e.g., children, single mothers, widows, elderly, disabled, as in Colombia)?

- ▶ A significant gap exists between reparations' commendable goals and actual benefits

E.g., Countries often focus on financial compensation bc it is more straightforward to implement and monitor than nonmonetary reparations (e.g., land restitution)

⇒ Full-scale implementation of "integral reparation" remains uncommon

Who is eligible for reparation is hard logistically, morally, politically

- ▶ Victims' registries often do not exist or fail to capture most victims OHCHR '08
- ▶ Requiring corroborating evidence for registration can burden or exclude those w/out supporting documentation, and the stigma of sexual violence discourages victims from coming forward
- ▶ Recognizing victims in the aftermath of mass violence can be morally and politically contentious due to conflicting narratives of victimhood

E.g., Chile and Argentina provided reparations selectively to victims of military dictatorships. In Peru, concerns about including former insurgents, seen as undeserving, diminished support for reparations de Greiff '06

Reparations are politically contested

- ▶ Gov'ts often argue against reparations due to perceived high costs, arguing that developmental needs take priority
- ▶ Some LMICs have prioritized reparations (e.g., Argentina, Colombia, South Africa, Sierra Leone), but few have implemented comprehensive reparations programs as part of TJ processes and many are unable to follow through on their promise Dixon '17
- ⇒ Most victims worldwide have not received reparations within their lifetimes Moffett '17
- ▶ Ultimately, political priorities determine whether reparations are deemed affordable, feasible, and urgent de Greiff '06—compelling evidence that reparations fulfill their promises may help garner the necessary political support

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Reviewing the evidence on what reparations do for victims

- ▶ Despite the growing popularity of reparations, research has primarily focused on theory and desired outcomes rather than their actual impact
- ▶ To bridge this gap, psychologists, political scientists, and sociologists have researched victims' perceptions and experiences with reparations
 - ▶ Methodologies: structured and unstructured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnography, qualitative fieldwork
 - ▶ Limitations: self-reports are subject to nonrandom nonresponse, recall issues, social desirability bias, and Hawthorne effects. Moreover, simple comparisons between recipients and nonrecipients are subject to omitted-variable bias

Qualitative evidence on reparations (1/2)

Experiences vary depending on program implementation and whether justice is delivered alongside financial compensation:

- ▶ **Attitudes toward compensation:** emotionally challenging, conflicting emotions, does not “repair” de Waardt '13; Vallejo '19; Sikkink et al. '15; O'Rourke & Swaine '17; Sveaas & Sonneland '15
- ⇒ Severe human rights violations cannot be fully undone and reparations can never fully compensate victims; reparations serve a symbolic function Danieli '14; de Greiff '06

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- ⇒ Severe human rights violations cannot be fully undone and reparations can never fully compensate victims; reparations serve a symbolic function Danieli '14; de Greiff '06
- ▶ **Recognition and justice:** Reparations help acknowledge harm, but are not perceived as delivering justice

E.g., In Colombia, +50% of compensated victims stated that reparations helped them feel recognized, but 66% reported that compensation did *not* bring justice Sikkink et al. '15

When reparations were not integrated into a comprehensive justice policy, victims viewed them as “blood money” and rejected compensation Sveaass & Sonneland '15; Danieli '14; Moon '12

Qualitative evidence on reparations (2/2)

▶ **Trust and reconciliation:**

- ▶ When implemented unevenly, reparations can exacerbate already existing tensions → must be complemented by efforts to rebuild social bonds [Firchow '17](#)
- ▶ Recognition from perpetrators, obtaining justice, receiving apology matter [Sikkink et al. '15](#)
- ▶ Poor implementation of reparations programs amplified resentment toward the state in Peru and Sierra Leone [Ottendoerfer '18](#)

▶ **Socioeconomic conditions:** Potential depends on contextual factors (e.g., amount, victims' baseline conditions):

- ▶ In Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, small compensation (<\$200) provided short-term relief but no impact on victims' living conditions [Ottendoerfer '18](#)
- ▶ Larger compensation enabled victims to purchase homes in Argentina [Sveaass & Sonneland '15](#), and victims in Colombia believed it "transformed" their lives [Sikkink et al. '15](#)

Evaluating a reparations program at scale Guarin et al. '23

- ▶ Estimate causal effects by leveraging the policy's staggered rollout and unexpected timing of payouts, using multiple linked administrative datasets
 - ▶ Reparations have a positive, lasting impact on the well-being of victims and families:
 - ▶ Significant improvements in victims' work and living conditions, better job quality, increased business survival
 - ▶ Increased consumption, land and home ownership
 - ▶ Improved health outcomes and reduced reliance of health care services
 - ▶ Investment in children's human capital (e.g., higher test scores, college attendance)
- ⇒ Reparations yield long-term economic benefits and can be cost-beneficial

Bottom line on what reparations do for victims

- ▶ Victims' views on reparations are complex and varied, depending on contextual factors. They provide recognition and can improve victims' socioeconomic outcomes, but their effects on healing, justice, and reconciliation are inconsistent
 - E.g., Poorly implemented programs—or financial compensation without a sense of justice—may have little or even harmful impact ⇒ 'Integral' reparation is key but rare
- ▶ Given the high stakes involved, research on designing and implementing reparations programs effectively is essential, especially for postconflict states with limited budgets aiming to promote development and implement human rights agendas

Open questions and areas for future research

- ▶ What is the causal effect of reparations on nonsocioeconomic outcomes (e.g., healing, peacebuilding, recovery)?
- ▶ How should reparations policies be designed to catalyze a “developmental boost” for victims and their families?
- ▶ How should reparations interact with SP to promote synergies? Can pairing financial compensation with other measures (e.g., psychosocial support) improve outcomes for victims and their families?
- ▶ What should be the dollar value of reparations benefits (financial and otherwise)?