ANNUAL REPORT

2024

CIFAR

OVERVIEW

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

BERLIN, MAY 2025

On behalf of the Board, we are pleased to present the Annual Report for 2024. The year saw some important highlights in our work.

Of note was the second Global Forum, which was held in December. This remains the only global meeting of civil society working on asset recovery and is a key moment for us to discuss developments and identify priorities collectively with our partners.

Alongside this, we produced innovative and informative research and tools, and used this to support partners advocate for national reforms. A focus this year was on the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR), where we supported the launch of six CSO assessments, which partners used to engage governments to strengthen asset recovery frameworks. A particular thematic focus was on asset returns: with research into best practices for independent mechanisms and support to partners from Angola to assess previous returns.

Moving into 2025, we can expect the situation to be challenging. The start of the year has already demonstrated the volatility in funding that is likely to be the hallmark of the anti-corruption field for the coming years. We are however convinced that we will weather these challenges to continue our work to advance civil society and public participation in stolen asset recovery.

Laila Martin Garcia (Chair)
Pedro Gomes Pereira
Vaclav Prusa
Dr. Bridget Onochie

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS 2024

Monitoring the CAPAR

We developed and piloted with civil society partners the first ever tool to monitor the implementation of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR). This standard paves the way for asset recovery reform in African Union Member States. With this tool, civil society is able to effectively assess the extent to which countries have a functional asset recovery system in place and make an evidence-based case for reform.

Ensuring progress in the Dos Santos case

Our work with civil society partners in Angola led to four organisations forming a coalition to closely collaborate for progress and reform. With our support, they were able to press authorities in Angola and Portugal to provide public updates on the case. They were also empowered to investigate previous returns to Angola, leading them to publish the first independent report into funds supposed to be used for a public infrastructure project.

Investigation-led change

Journalist investigations produced through our Investigate training programmes led to government reforms in 2025. An investigation focused on the social and financial impacts of a big Malawi tobacco company led to the Ministry of Trade in Malawi urging companies to disclose contract conditions to workers. A second identified an alleged link between the murder of the Ecuadorian presidential candidate Villavicencio and the illegal arms trade in Peru.

Global CSO Forum

We organised the second edition of the only global meeting of asset recovery focussed civil society in December 2024 in Brazil, bringing together 20 organisations from 17 countries to identify civil society priorities in asset recovery for the years to come. Focussing on Latin America, it also brought in new organisations - expanding the number of civil society organisations linked together globally to advocate for transparent, accountable and participatory asset recovery.

SETTING STANDARDS

1

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

This year saw further research into innovative avenues and best practices towards accountable and transparent asset recovery.

We published two reports on independent return mechanisms:

- Management and Oversight of Independents Return Funds
- Best Practices for Independent Return Funds

We also published three reports on examples and lessons learned from Kenya on asset recovery:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution;
- Social Re-use of Recovered Assets; and
- Asset Management.

Additionally, two policy briefs explored respectively the existing framework for the distribution of recovered assets to communities in Kenya, and asset registration systems.

In November, we published a key report on sanctions enforcement, analysing legal frameworks of several jurisdictions and formulating recommendations to avoid sanctions breaches, and bolster anti-corruption sanctions as a tool for asset recovery. We also published the bi-annual updates of our Sanctions Watch web platform, which continues to garner substantial interest.

HIGHLIGHTS

Research reports produced throughout the year advanced global discussions around independent return mechanisms and national reform discussions in Angola, Kenya and Mozambique on asset management.

Approached for our expertise by 11 governments, 9 intergovernmental bodies and over 50 CSO colleagues and provided advice on accountable, transparent and participatory asset recovery.

Promoted collective civil society asset return principles at international forums, promoting awareness to asset recovery actors from government, civil society and the private sector.

SETTING STANDARDS

1

We used our research to engage in informed discussions globally and regionally. This included participating in a high-level panel of East African Asset Recovery Agencies in Nairobi to discuss the management of recovered assets, organized by UNODC.

Our work also included co-organising events at the UNCAC Conference of States Parties Implementation Review Group meeting in Vienna in September. There we discussed standards civil society has produced to advance asset recovery with over 60 government delegations and CSO representatives. We also spoke in November on the role of civil society in asset return at the practitioner focused International Expert Meeting on asset return and sustainable development, “Addis 4”, in Addis Ababa.

We continued our efforts to promote civil society principles in international meetings and events, such as during the International Anti-Corruption Conference in June – where we held a panel with the UNODC/World Bank StAR Initiative, Switzerland and TI USA.

Our work on enablers received a positive push as we launched a new project, funded by the UK FCDO GI-ACE programme, focusing on city level responses to illicit finance in the real estate sector. The project focusses on global south cities in Brazil, Kenya and Indonesia and promises new insights into how an ecosystem approach could be deployed to prevent corrupt money flows.

IMPLEMENTING REFORMS

2

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Our work in our priority countries continued being at the centre of our efforts in 2024. In Angola, we collaborated extensively with partner CSOs to assess the extent to which returned assets were effectively used in the framework of the PIIM (Integrated Plan for Intervention in Municipalities). The report our partners published received media attention and resulted in a reaction from local authorities, which started discussing the case publicly. In Mozambique, we supported partners to monitor new cases and to monitor the work of the asset recovery agency. In Brazil and Moldova, we helped partners in their advocacy efforts and forged valuable links with important stakeholders in the countries. In Kenya, our work to advocate for transparent, accountable and participatory asset recovery in recent years saw us in 2024 engage in national discussions and reforms, participate in 13 events, and support discussions with several groups of stakeholders. This includes our Kenya research being used to: inform a civil society position for a regional UNODC event this year; contribute to a draft amendment law on anti-money laundering; and supporting a statement to compel relevant actors to publish a national asset recovery strategy.

A key milestone of 2024 was the work conducted around the Common Africa Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR), in particular the development of a tool for CSOs to assess their country's progress towards implementation of the CAPAR principles, which was then piloted with our support in six countries across Africa.

HIGHLIGHTS

Launched six CSO assessments of national implementation of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery, used by partners to engage government counterparts for reform.

Provided training to over 130 CSO activists and supported partners in Angola, Mozambique, Moldova, Kenya and beyond in legal and policy reform, monitoring ongoing cases, and transferring best practices in asset recovery.

Expanded connections with officials on the regional and global scale and further brought CSO voices to global debates.

> Without a doubt, the work carried out, particularly the investigations into PIIM projects over the past six months, has already yielded important results, impacting governmental structures. We hope that this will reinforce the commitment to transparency in the reuse of various recovered assets.
>
> *Rafael Morais (UYELE)*

IMPLEMENTING REFORMS

2

We coordinated the simultaneous launch of the publications in November. The reports received significant attention and appreciation from policymakers in the six countries, igniting discussions with the authorities on asset recovery reform. Overall, the work around CAPAR strengthened our regional cooperation toward reforms in anti-corruption and asset recovery, and have been relayed by international actors, including the AU's Advisory Board against Corruption and the Pan Africa Lawyers Union.

On the regional level, we strengthened our collaboration with the African Union, participating in two major events: the first "Pan-African Asset Recovery Practitioners Forum" in January in Dar es Salaam, where we contributed to discussions around the structure and scope of the new collaborative platform facilitated by AU-ABC, and the 8th Annual African Anti-Corruption Dialogue-Non State Actors Forum in November.

Our engagement on the global scale also remained strong this year, as we maintained efforts to collaborate with international bodies on asset recovery reforms, especially with the UN, G20, and the World Bank, and through our continued co-leadership of the UNCAC Coalition Asset Recovery Working Group. In September and as part of our ongoing close collaboration, we were invited by StAR to support a training to six CSOs from Moldova, Nigeria, Seychelles, Ukraine and Zambia within the GFAR action series

2024 trainings in numbers:	
50	We trained over 50 CSO activists in specific trainings for partners from Malawi, Sri Lanka and Venezuela
50	We conducted a series of workshops designed to equip our lusophone CSO partners with effective knowledge to monitor the social impact of the asset recovery efforts, attended by over 50 participants over 4 sessions
30	We gave a workshop on asset recovery to 30 members of the RedeGov network: from Angola, Brazil, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, and Mozambique

ADVANCING TRANSPARENCY

3

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

In Angola, we supported partners to publish an open letter in August. The letter, sent to the public prosecutors of Angola and Portugal, requested the release of information on the Dos Santos case and was picked up in at least 18 national and international media reports and radio shows, including by the ICIJ, Deutsche Welle and various media in Portugal. The high interest generated by the letter sparked a reaction by Angola's public prosecutor's office, which committed to share the request with the authority in Angola responsible for access to information requests.

Our work with investigative journalists continued into 2024. With our latest Investigate programme - focusing on East and Southern Africa and Peru - ending in January, six stories were published. An investigation focused on the social and financial impacts of a big Malawi tobacco company received large international attention. It was published in six international and national outlets: Investigative Platform, ZAM magazine, the Elephant, the Mail & Guardian, the Continent, and Courrier International, and led to the Ministry of Trade in Malawi urging companies to disclose contract conditions to workers. Another story looked at the shady deals undertaken by a Polish company previously condemned for the illegal arms trade and was published in two Polish outlets in March (Fakt and Radiozet).

HIGHLIGHTS

Support to partner Angolan CSOs for greater transparency in the Dos Santos case led to authorities committing to increased information disclosure.

Six new investigations were published which uncovered corruption in Peru and East and Southern Africa.

These investigations led to political and policy responses aimed at remedying the harm caused and preventing future corruption.

ADVANCING TRANSPARENCY

3

Following our training and mentoring programme in Peru, supporting 15 journalists in their investigations, four stories were published. One focussing on arms trafficking networks between Peru and Ecuador received large attention as it alleged a link between the murder of the Ecuadorian presidential candidate Villavicencio and illegal arm trade in Peru. The story was mentioned in numerous other media, among which Deutsche Welle.

In March, we were invited to present our work around our Investigate programmes in an exhibition organised by the GIZ and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in their headquarters in Bonn, Germany. The exhibition was also taken to be displayed during the International Anti-Corruption Conference in Vilnius, in June.

In Kenya, we organised a Media Roundtable in July 2024 to promote the importance of asset recovery across the media, in partnership with Global Financial Integrity (GFI). We introduced 10 prominent Kenyan media practitioners to the subject of asset recovery within the broader context of anti-corruption and illicit financial flows and emphasised the critical role of investigative journalists in uncovering corruption.

NETWORKS FOR CHANGE

4

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

We held our second Global CSO Forum on Asset Recovery on the 3-5 December in Brasilia, Brazil.23 participants from 20 organizations and 17 countries – alongside the CiFAR team – took part in the event. The Forum was another defining moment for CiFAR's future work and partnerships. It allowed us to identify common policy areas and positions, discuss challenges and learn from each other, and foster new cross-regional collaborations.

2024 marked an acceleration in the strengthening of new collaborations – especially with Latin America, which were confirmed during the Forum. While our work with Venezuela started in 2021, we kept on engaging with our partners through the organisation of a training workshop in Miami in January, our participation to an international conference in Madrid on human rights and kleptocracy in Venezuela. The Global CSO Forum also was an important moment to strengthen our relationship with TI Brazil, our main partner in the country, as we were invited to join a new task force that they coordinate.

We continued to co-lead the UNCAC Coalition Asset Recovery Working Group this year, organizing five meetings of civil society globally engaged in asset recovery to discuss new developments, cases and to hear in-depth discussions from expert speakers. Importantly this year we coordinated work around CSO asks for a potential new CoSP resolution and brought in UK government speakers to the meetings to support greater collaboration.

HIGHLIGHTS

Holding our second Global CSO Forum, forging valuable collaborations and exchanges, and sparkling potential for our extended engagement in Latin America.

Facilitation of cross-border civil society collaboration on asset returns, asset management and victims and with decision-makers, including supporting the CAPAR CSO Network and co-chairing the UNCAC Coalition Asset Recovery Working Group

Strengthening our internal structures to help CIFAR better respond to global challenges.

> "CiFAR has been instrumental in connecting Transparency International Brazil to a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations from around the world, international organizations, policy makers and members of the academia. This has contributed to our efforts to locate and recover funds stolen from the Brazilian society."
> *Bruno Brandão - Transparency International Brazil*

NETWORKS FOR CHANGE

4

We participated in May in a meeting of the Lusophone anti-corruption CSO network "RedeGov" in Rio de Janeiro. The event, coordinated by TI Brazil and EG Justice, was an important networking opportunity to discuss ongoing collaborations with all partners. Moreover, the RedeGov network sees CiFAR as a key partner as they continue to develop their strategy, particularly in the area of asset recovery.

Finally for our internal sustainability, we have redoubled our efforts to ensure our financial stability and ensure our sustainability, which has enabled us to secure core funding from the Swiss Development Cooperation for the next five years.

> What has motivated and continues to motivate us is that CiFAR has created a space for a consortium, bringing our organisations closer in defending human rights in Angola. We are certain that together, we can do much more to promote transparency and truth in asset recovery and reuse."
> *Guilherme Neves (Mãos Livres)*

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