

# Annual Report 2023



Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative  
The World Bank • UNODC



UNODC  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



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1818 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20433  
Telephone: 202-473-1000  
Internet: [star.worldbank.org](https://star.worldbank.org)  
Email: [starinitiative@worldbank.org](mailto:starinitiative@worldbank.org)  
Twitter: [@returningassets](https://twitter.com/returningassets)  
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**StAR**—the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative—is a partnership between the World Bank Group and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) that supports international efforts to end safe havens for corrupt funds. StAR works with developing countries and financial centers to prevent the laundering of the proceeds of corruption and to facilitate more systematic and timely return of stolen assets.

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# Foreword

As 2023 began and COVID-19 finally disappeared in our rear-view mirror, the StAR team returned to travel in earnest, initiating new country work and joining numerous international policy events. One of the highpoints in that category was undoubtedly our participation in the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in December. We made a splash. At our traditional StAR Day, the sixth of such events, we relaunched our long anticipated Asset Recovery Watch (ARW), the only global database on completed and ongoing asset recovery cases related to proceeds of corruption. It is one of the most visited parts of our website, demonstrating the great need for objective facts on what is happening on the asset recovery front. We also launched two new publications during that day, bringing our total to five for 2023, and showcased more focused and case-related country work under the umbrella of the Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) Action Series, in partnership with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Center (IACCC) and the International Center for Asset Recovery (ICAR) and co-hosted by the United States, France and United Kingdom. It capped an action-packed year of transition for StAR shifting our focus from research and inquiry during the COVID-19 era back to directly supporting countries.

That transition will continue in 2024, as we expand and deepen our country work. This means that we aim to both increase the number of countries that we assist whilst also making our work on capacity building more targeted, either because it relates to case work or because our assistance draws on expertise which few others can provide. That includes support on the implementation of beneficial ownership transparency mechanisms, putting in place cooperation arrangements between law enforcement and tax authorities, tracing and seizing virtual assets, establishing effective income and asset disclosure systems, and following up on the needs identified in the second cycle of the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism. We will be working to develop new trainings based on our recently completed knowledge work, such as [Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets: A Guide for Practitioners](#). We are now receiving more requests for this area of work which is encouraging because it means more countries are actually seizing assets. This conclusion corresponds with [one of the findings](#) in the analysis of the information in the ARW database, namely that the group of countries involved in asset recovery is growing beyond the usual suspects. That is a trend we want to support. This year, where more people will be going to the polls than ever before, anti-corruption promises to be high on many countries’ agenda, so we plan to capitalize on that momentum to make a real difference.

That said, our reorientation does not mean we are abandoning our knowledge work. We have several works to complete and will continue to update our ARW database and country beneficial ownership and asset recovery guides. Finally, we are honored to be partnering with Brazil, this year’s Presidency of the G20, who, under the umbrella of the Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG), have asked us to collaborate with them on the drafting and publication of a report on the direct recovery of assets (using civil as opposed to criminal measures).

In short, enough exciting work to be looking forward to. We hope we can continue to count on our donors’ generous support to make a positive impact.  
—Emile van der Does de Willebois on behalf of the StAR team



# The Year in Review

In recent years, the world has seen a steady decline in civil and political freedoms and a deterioration in the rule of law. Weakened institutions open the door for corruption to flourish, which has steadily increased in the past year. These developments underscore the necessity of the work conducted by the Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative and its partners that seek to support international efforts to end safe havens and right the wrongs wrought by corruption. The StAR Initiative, a partnership between the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), had a fruitful year providing support to requesting countries and continuing its obligation toward the facilitation of asset recovery in accordance with Chapter V of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The team had successful country engagements, produced timely knowledge products, and contributed to the anti-corruption policy agenda, with StAR shining bright at the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) to UNCAC, held in December 2023 in Atlanta, United States of America.

- 20 countries received StAR assistance in 2023
- 10 countries received technical assistance on legislative reform
- 4 countries adopted new laws or amendments related to asset recovery with StAR support
- 600+ people trained globally by StAR
- 3 countries receiving StAR assistance opened or concluded at least one new AR case involving proceeds of corruption

- 6 countries received StAR support to improve domestic coordination processes
- 1 country improved domestic coordination mechanisms with StAR support
- 12 countries received StAR support to improve international cooperation processes
- 24 global policy events contributed to by StAR
- 5 knowledge products published by StAR

**United States of America**  
StAR organized the sixth Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative Asset Recovery Day (StAR Day) special event during CoSP10

**Global**  
In Vienna, StAR kicked off the Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) Action Series on the margins of the fourth GlobE Network plenary, with Moldova as the first focus country. Further case consultation meetings were organized on the margins of the UNCAC Working Group on Asset Recovery for Moldova and Zambia as the second focus country to join the Action Series.

**Kazakhstan**  
StAR facilitated international cooperation with requested jurisdictions during CoSP10 and provided feedback on the draft legislation on the return of illegally acquired assets to the State

**Mongolia**  
StAR conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) course on financial investigations and prosecutorial strategy building for a select group of prosecutors, investigators, and lecturers

**Moldova**  
StAR assisted in reviewing and drafting legislation on measures for strengthening the Anti-Corruption Prosecution Service, which was passed into law in November

**India**  
Over a month, StAR conducted a virtual workshop on technical aspects of asset recovery for the Directorate of Enforcement

**Seychelles**  
StAR provided a two-day training on risk-based supervision of the Trust and Company Service Provider (TCSP) sector with a focus on the Seychelles' offshore sector



**Nigeria**  
StAR and implementing partner, Open Ownership, organized a three-day multilateral peer-learning exchange focused on beneficial ownership between Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, and South Africa

**Ecuador**  
StAR conducted a course on asset returns for participants from the Attorney-General's Office and the Financial Intelligence Unit (UAFE)

# Country Engagements

2023 allowed for greater country engagement, due to StAR’s expanded reach through the launch of the GFAR Action Series, co-hosted by the United States, , France, and the United Kingdom, and in partnership with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IACCC) and the International Centre for Asset Recovery (ICAR). Requesting jurisdictions received assistance on legislative reform, regulatory frameworks, capacity building, facilitation with improving domestic coordination mechanisms, and support related to asset recovery efforts. StAR’s implementing partnership with Open Ownership (OO), a global nonprofit organization working to create transparency over who owns and controls companies, also served to bring new country engagements to the fore, and in implementation of CoSP resolutions on beneficial ownership.

## Legislative Assistance

In 2023, StAR provided technical assistance to ten countries  on proposed amendments and draft bills, and four countries  adopted new legislation:



**Ethiopia**  
Reviewed new legislation on unexplained wealth, money laundering, asset management, and asset recovery



**Honduras**  
Reviewed the beneficial ownership legislation through the World Bank [Global Tax Program’s](#) National Risk Assessment of Tax Evasion



**Kazakhstan**  
Provided comments on the Law on the Return of Illegally Acquired Assets to the State, which was adopted in July



**Liberia**  
Through partnership with Open Ownership, supported new beneficial ownership regulations, which were adopted in August, and supported efforts to develop a central digital beneficial ownership registry, launched in September



**Moldova**  
Supported by the FCD0-funded World Bank project on anti-corruption and asset recovery, reviewed and supported the drafting process for several pieces of legislation, including strengthening post-conviction confiscation, the establishment of an anti-corruption court, civil confiscation, and amendments to Art. 2701 of the Criminal Procedure Code on Competence of the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office wereadopted in November



**Namibia**  
Through partnership with Open Ownership, examined the amendments to the Trust Administration, Financial Intelligence and the Companies Acts and input on regulatory reforms of the country’s framework for collecting beneficial ownership information



**Nigeria**  
Provided drafting support and coordination on implementing regulations for the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act (POCA) 2022



**South Africa**  
Through partnership with Open Ownership, reviewed and provided comments on the Regulations for the Companies Act, which came into effect in May



**Ukraine**  
Analyzed and provided support on draft legislation - including strengthening the institutional and procedural independence of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office, restoring the asset declaration system—and the Draft Law on Reform of the Bureau of Economic Security (BES)



**Uzbekistan**  
Provided support with strengthening the legal framework and effectiveness of tracing, freezing, seizing, confiscating and returning proceeds of corruption and the draft laws on asset recovery, conflict of interests and asset declarations, and anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism

## Building National Capacity

An important component of StAR’s work is to bridge existing gaps in institutional capacity when dealing with corruption cases in general, and asset recovery in particular. StAR has developed several courses that aim to build basic skills for those who are involved in international cooperation, investigate money laundering and corruption, or oversee the declaration of assets and interests. In 2023, the team successfully delivered 16 training courses, at times in partnership with others:



### Ecuador

A three-day workshop provided an overview of asset return provisions under the United Nations Convention against Corruption and practical considerations related to confiscation and asset return



### Honduras

Supported by the World Bank [Global Tax Program’s](#) National Risk Assessment of Tax Evasion program, conducted a virtual workshop on beneficial ownership transparency for national authorities



### Kenya

A virtual workshop, in collaboration with Open Ownership, for Kenya’s Business Registration Service (BRS) outlined the changes to FATF Standard on Beneficial Ownership Transparency Recommendation 24 and provided an introduction to the World Bank money laundering risk assessment of legal persons



### Ethiopia

A high-level training on asset recovery for senior leadership from national authorities engaged in improving domestic coordination. Separately, StAR conducted a practical workshop tailored explicitly for the judiciary, which focused on challenges faced by judges when deciding cases involving the recovery of proceeds of corruption



### India

Over a month, a training was conducted on legal avenues for asset recovery, the early stages of international cooperation, investigating beneficial ownership in cross-border cases and investigative tools used by the United States in asset recovery



### Lebanon

A series of asset recovery raising awareness trainings, in collaboration with the newly established National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), provided to different groups of practitioners from national institutions



### Mongolia

A webinar on understanding beneficial ownership to prevent the facilitation of cross-border crime was conducted. StAR also delivered a training of trainers (ToT) course on financial investigations and prosecutorial strategy building to a select group of practitioners which included prosecutors, investigators from the Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) and lecturers from the Police, Prosecutors, and Public Policy schools of the University of the Internal Affairs.



### Namibia

A virtual training was held on advancing beneficial ownership transparency



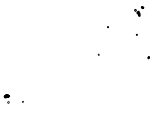
### Nigeria

A multilateral peer exchange on beneficial ownership implementation, in partnership with Open Ownership, supported practitioners from Kenya, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria and South Africa. In addition, StAR conducted a workshop for Nigerian authorities on the implementation of the recently adopted POCA and a session tailored to the work of the Asset Recovery and Management Unit (ARMU) in the Ministry of Justice.



### Senegal

A hybrid regional workshop on financial investigations and asset management was attended by delegates from Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Mauritania, Chad and Burkina Faso



### Seychelles

A two-day workshop was delivered to financial sector regulators on risk-based supervision of the Trust and Company Service Provider (TCSP) sector with a focus on the offshore sector



### Ukraine

An advanced course on conducting cryptocurrency investigations, was delivered to Ukrainian authorities in Warsaw, Poland



## Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) Action Series

International cooperation is an arduous process that takes creativity and perseverance over extended periods of time. Requesting jurisdictions face long odds in identifying stolen assets, and seeking their confiscation and return, while requested countries contend with many demands on their time and resources, and international cooperation requests often become yet another item on a very long to-do list. That is why it can be useful to organize high level meetings, where commitments are made and next steps are announced, as “action forcing events” that ensure due attention is paid to pending and forthcoming requests and progress is made. Over the years, StAR has become the go-to body for the organization of such meetings, including for the Arab Forums on Asset Recovery (AFAR), the Ukraine Forum on Asset Recovery (UFAR) and the first-ever Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) held in 2017. The [GFAR Principles for Disposition and Transfer of Confiscated Stolen Assets in Corruption Cases](#) were adopted at the first Global Forum by the co-hosts, US and UK, and focus countries, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Ukraine, and are still widely referenced on the international stage.

The GFAR Action Series extends the impact of the initial Global Forum by assessing its accomplishments and exploring their relevance to present-day challenges. Co-hosted by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom and organized by StAR, with

the IACCC and ICAR joining as partners to support focus country efforts, the GFAR Action Series adopts a practitioner-oriented and flexible approach to support a variety of asset recovery steps. It fosters direct engagement between several focus countries and the requested jurisdictions they prioritize for cooperation on asset recovery cases.

The inaugural GFAR Action Series meetings kicked off at the GlobE Network plenary meeting in July and continued at the UNCAC Working Group on Asset Recovery (ARWG) in September with practitioner focused discussions in over 20 bilateral and 3 multi-jurisdictional case meetings for the two initial focus countries: **Moldova** and **Zambia**. In the lead up to COSP10, **Algeria, Honduras, Iraq, Nigeria, Seychelles** and **Ukraine** also requested to join the Action Series to advance ongoing cases.

By the conclusion of CoSP10, at least 20 requested jurisdictions participated in case meetings with the eight focus countries, resulting in over 50 bilateral meetings, one multijurisdictional briefing, two trilateral meetings, and one quadrilateral meeting. Alongside case consultations, focus countries explored the implementation of GFAR Principles and stakeholder engagement in asset recovery and return.

[During a high-level session at the CoSP10 StAR Day](#), the co-hosts announced multiple returns, while partners and delegations from focus countries shared

insights into the benefits of the GFAR Action Series process and its action forcing impact. During a CoSP10 GFAR debriefing, a practitioner from a focus country noted that the GFAR Action Series was as a new mechanism for achieving concrete progress and tangible results in asset recovery and return under Chapter V of UNCAC. The Action Series will continue during the US Presidency of the CoSP, with co-hosts, StAR and its partners striving to build upon the work and successes of the 2023 consultations.

In addition to the case-related support provided through the GFAR Action Series, StAR assisted several focus countries with broader work at the national level, such as legislative reforms and domestic coordination mechanisms.

The accomplishments of the GFAR Action Series are attributed to the intensive preparations undertaken by requesting focus countries ahead of the case consultation meetings. Recent data from the relaunched Asset Recovery Watch Database reveal a broader engagement across both sides of the asset recovery equation, with StAR collaborating with a diverse array of requesting and requested jurisdictions beyond the traditional participants. This trend was underscored during the preparatory phase for the GFAR Action Series, where focus countries identified over 30 requested jurisdictions for cooperation in that framework. StAR worked closely with the focus countries, along with partners IACCC and ICAR, to identify and prioritize the asset recovery cases and actions that would benefit from the Action Series’ approach. The robust partnership between StAR, IACCC and ICAR was evident in the coordinated and cohesive substantive support to relevant focus countries, ensuring efficient utilization of each organization’s expertise and avoiding duplication of efforts.

To enhance the effectiveness of these meetings, StAR and its partners, along with law enforcement authorities from the co-host countries, also focused on preparatory efforts with the identified requested jurisdictions. This included outreach to relevant practitioners, preparatory calls, and the exchange of relevant materials prior to in-person meetings. This approach enabled more meaningful and productive case consultations, while also highlighting the gap between those countries and practitioners that were responsive, willing to cooperate and came prepared, and those that were not. Several requested jurisdictions were commended during StAR Day for their cooperation, including the GFAR Action Series co-hosts, Spain, and Switzerland.

“ The Global Forum on Asset Recovery (GFAR) Action Series provides critical opportunities for investigators and prosecutors across the world to come together to build capacity, share expertise, and increase cooperation on specific asset recovery matters. ”

—Kevin Driscoll  
Deputy Assistant Attorney General, United States

“ We see that the cooperation in this framework of CoSP and the StAR Initiative facilitates our efforts in the future return of stolen assets. ”

—Denys Maliuska  
Minister of Justice, Ukraine

“ We are grateful for the opportunity, during the Action Series, to strengthen international cooperation to achieve asset recovery and we look forward to the repatriation of stolen assets as we continue to strengthen our partnership with ICAR, IACCC and StAR. ”

—Gilbert Phiri  
Director of Public Prosecutions, Zambia

“ Technical exchanges with practitioners bear witness to the usefulness of the Merida Convention for the return of stolen assets. ”

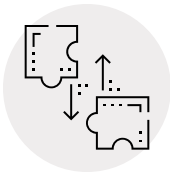
—Celine Guillet  
Prosecutor, Financial Prosecution Service, France



Left: Representatives from the US, Moldova, Algeria, Seychelles, Zambia and Iraq (l-r) at CoSP10. Right: Information briefing on GFAR Action Series during ARWG.

## Facilitating Domestic Coordination

StAR has been a proponent of the whole-of-government approach to asset recovery, through which national authorities set up domestic coordination mechanisms for information exchange that supports the asset recovery process, spanning from investigations to returns. In 2023, StAR provided technical support to six countries to enhance their domestic coordination on asset recovery measures, resulting in the adoption of new mechanisms in one country: ●



**Ethiopia**  
The Directorate of Asset Recovery further expanded its domestic coordination efforts by signing MOUs for information exchange with key entities such as the Financial Intelligence Service, Customs, Internal Revenue, and Documents Authentication and Registry Agency, and the National Bank

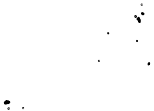
The following countries received support for domestic coordination mechanisms under the GFAR Action Series for identification and prioritization of asset recovery cases:



Moldova



**Nigeria**  
Additional support was provided for domestic coordination of relevant designated agencies under POCA for asset management



Seychelles



Ukraine



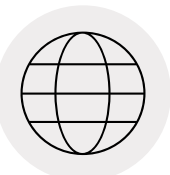
Zambia



GFAR Action Series preparatory meetings before CoSP10 (left) and bilateral case consultations under GFAR Action Series (right)

## Case Support

Since its inception, StAR has facilitated international cooperation, establishing direct contact between requesting and requested states. Technical support in this area can range from informal introductions through bilateral meetings on the margins of global conferences to facilitating channels for formal cooperation. In 2023, StAR supported several countries in their efforts to advance international cooperation on existing asset recovery cases. Four countries ● were supported through StAR's general country work, and eight countries ● were supported as part of the GFAR Action Series:



Algeria



Angola



Ethiopia



Honduras



Iraq



Kazakhstan



Moldova



Nigeria



Seychelles



Ukraine



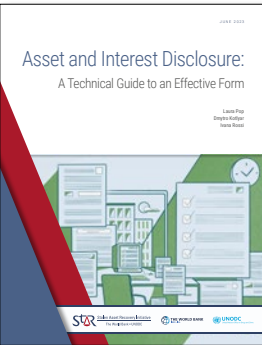
Uzbekistan



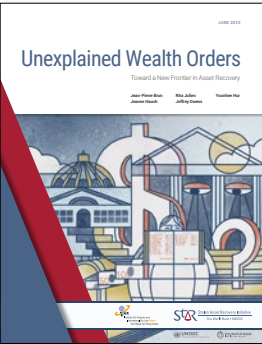
Zambia



# Knowledge & Innovation



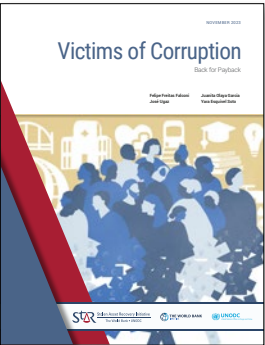
In June, StAR published [Asset and Interest Disclosure: A Technical Guide to an Effective Form](#), a comprehensive resource focusing on the disclosure form, a central component of any asset and interest declaration mechanism. This form mandates public officials to furnish details regarding their income, assets, liabilities, expenditures, and other interests, including those of their family members, where applicable. Drawing from an analysis of the legal frameworks of over 150 jurisdictions and insights gained from direct engagement with more than 25 countries throughout the various stages of their disclosure system reforms, this guide serves as a valuable tool for policymakers and asset declaration practitioners tasked with developing new disclosure forms or redesigning existing ones to ensure their robustness.



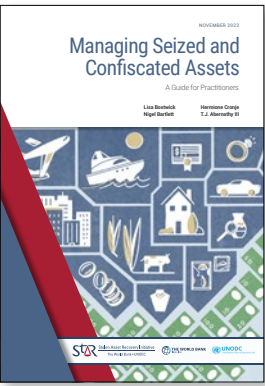
During the same month, StAR collaborated with the Vienna University WU Global Tax Policy Center at the Institute of Austrian and International Tax Law to publish [Unexplained Wealth Orders: Toward a New Frontier in Asset Recovery](#). This study offers policymakers an overview of unexplained wealth order (UWO) systems as adopted by different jurisdictions attempting to recover the proceeds of corruption or organized crime. UWOs compel individuals, typically a public official, to provide information on the source of his wealth when it is inconsistent with known legitimate sources of income. The study places UWOs within the broader context of other asset recovery tools and draws lessons for countries considering the introduction of UWO-type legislation, explaining under which conditions UWO may fill a gap in national asset recovery systems. The study encourages the integration of UWO systems as part of a comprehensive whole of policies tailored to specific legal contexts.



In November, StAR collaborated with the World Bank Financial Stability team to publish [No More Sweet Deals: The Need to Reform Banks' Related Party Transactions](#). Despite efforts by governments and standard setting bodies to curtail Related Party transactions (RPTs) over the past two decades, instances of abusive RPTs persist across emerging and advanced economies. Such transactions, often conducted between a bank and a related party such as a senior Board member, a senior management team member, or a large shareholder, often unduly advantage the related party at the expense of the financial institution. Abusive RPTs stem from various root causes, including weaknesses in the legal, regulatory, or corporate governance frameworks of banks, power imbalances within their decision-making processes and due to multiple regulatory and supervisory loopholes. The paper presents a comprehensive set of recommendations to address these problems.



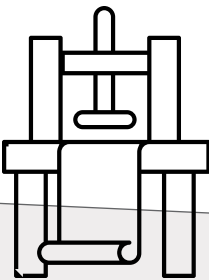
In December, StAR published [Victims of Corruption: Back for Payback](#), which outlines existing international legal frameworks aimed at assisting victims of corruption and initiates discussion on avenues for reparation, who has legal standing as a victim and how to establish damages. Drawing on responses from 56 jurisdictions to two questionnaires circulated by UNODC and the Asset Recovery Committee of the International Bar Association concerning countries' legislation and their implementation, this publication identifies measures to explore in order to properly promote the reparation of victims of corruption.



Finally, also published in December, [Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets: A Guide for Practitioners](#), offers guidance on preserving and maximizing the value of seized and confiscated assets. From pre-seizure planning to preserving value during custody and maximizing value at disposal, this guide equips practitioners with essential knowledge to establish effective asset management functions and optimize portfolios to manage complex assets. Rooted in international studies, asset management expert interviews, and case examples, the guide provides recommendations and good practices for managing complex assets.



Panel discussion and launch of asset management guide during StAR Day



## Forthcoming Publications in 2024

- StAR is currently working on several research and knowledge projects including:
- A paper on issues linked to legal professional privilege and how it affects investigators' ability to ascertain beneficial ownership and measures to prevent the abuse of legal privilege
  - A report to guide policy makers and practitioners on the alignment of asset recovery with due process and international standards
  - Updates of beneficial ownership and asset recovery guides





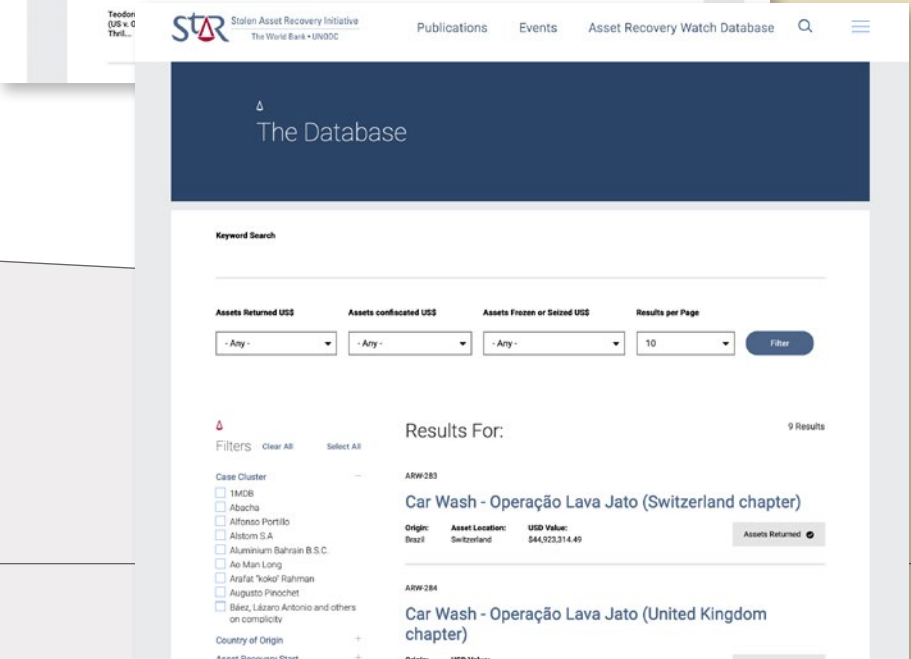
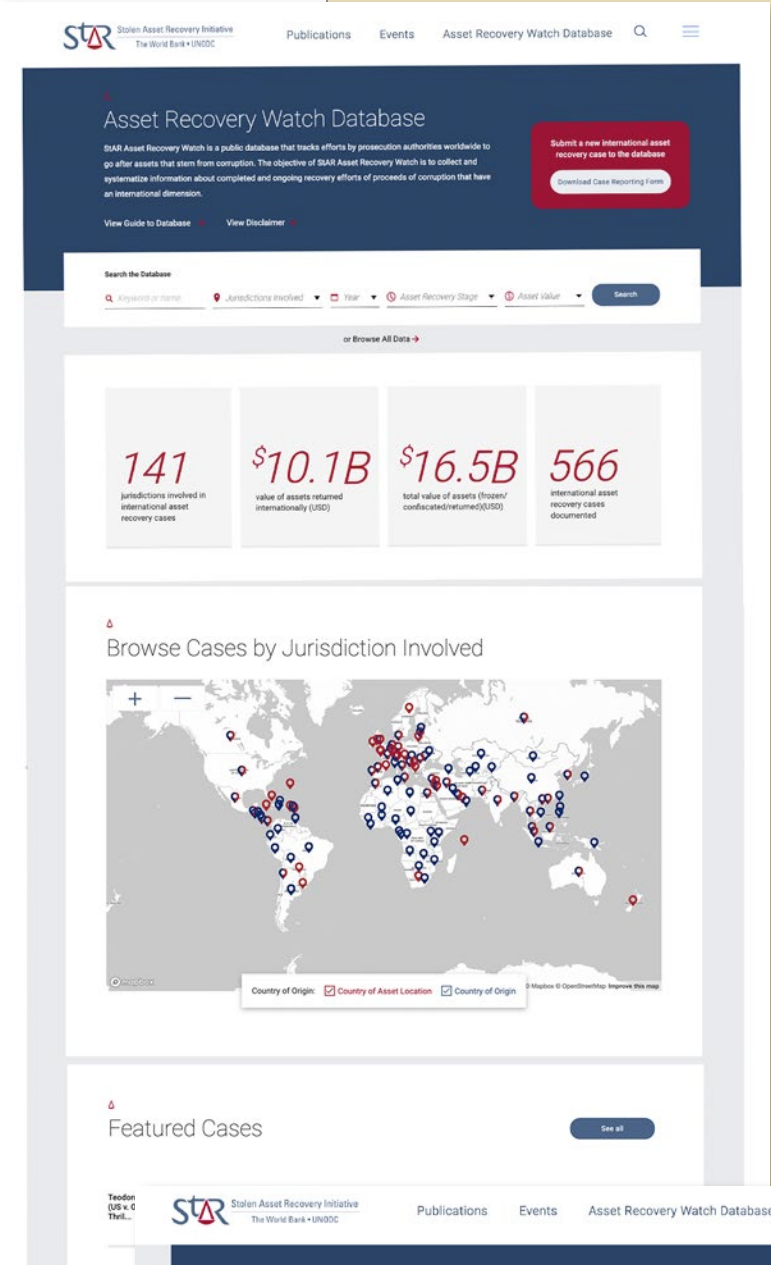
StAR team and participants at the Expert Group Meeting in Washington DC

## Expert Group Meeting on Equivalent Value Based Confiscation

An ongoing challenge in seizing and confiscating proceeds of crime, is establishing a clear link between a specific asset and a particular crime. Certainly, after years of a corrupt regime having been in power, such direct links may be hard to demonstrate. To address this issue, equivalent value-based confiscation (VBC), offers a solution by enabling the confiscation of assets equivalent in value to the benefit derived from criminal activities, regardless of their origin. Recognizing the significance of this approach and the limited ongoing discourse on the topic, StAR has embarked on a comprehensive study, with an expected release in 2024. The study commenced with an Expert Group Meeting at WB Headquarters in Washington, DC, in February. Participants from 18 countries shared their experiences with using VBC domestically, discussed challenges in international cooperation, and explored what they considered the most appropriate approach(es) for presenting and promoting VBC to deepen understanding of this asset recovery tool and to encourage its wider adoption.



In May, the StAR team participated [in the official launch of the Mongolian translation of the StAR Asset Recovery Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners \(Second Edition 2021\)](#), which was spearheaded by the Prosecutor-General of Mongolia.



## Asset Recovery Watch Database

It is well documented that the facts and figures surrounding proceeds of corruption remain difficult to verify. Despite its prominence on the international agenda, there is little known about the actual scale, scope and practice of cross-border restraints and the return of stolen assets, as mandated by Chapter V of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Policymakers, anti-corruption and asset recovery practitioners, civil society organizations and donors have consistently underscored the need for access to global knowledge that supports the quality and efficiency of recovery and return of proceeds of corruption.

To address this need, StAR re-launched the [Asset Recovery Watch \(ARW\) database](#) on December 12, 2023, during the StAR Day special event at CoSP10. This revamped platform features a new design and updated cases from [StAR's data collection study](#) on international asset recovery efforts in corruption cases. The ARW stands as the sole public database dedicated to tracking efforts by country authorities worldwide to recover and return proceeds of corruption. Its primary objective is to collect and organize information on completed and ongoing cross-border recovery efforts, facilitating a deeper understanding of emerging trends, measuring progress, building a robust dataset for practitioners and researchers, fostering transparency and accountability.

Presently, the StAR ARWdatabase showcases over 560 ongoing or completed recovery cases with an international component (with two or more jurisdictions involved), covering over 140 jurisdictions. These encompass nearly three quarters of all UNCAC states parties, underscoring the broad geographical diversity of countries of origin and asset location. The total value of assets returned internationally exceeds USD 10 billion for the current cases catalogues in the database. These figures will be regularly updated as StAR receives additional information on international asset recovery cases from States parties, ensuring it remains a dynamic resource for research and evidence-based policymaking.

StAR remains committed to encouraging jurisdictions to publish statistics related to international returns, seizures, and confiscations, thereby promoting transparency and accountability. It is our hope that the ARW database serves as a platform for gaining deeper insights into the practice of international asset recovery and provides essential elements for evaluating countries' efforts to live up to international commitments.





# Policy & Partnerships

Asset recovery continues to be a top priority on the international agenda, evidenced by the increasing number of fora dedicated to addressing related issues. The OECD, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, the Financial Action Task Force, and the G20 have all intensified their efforts in this domain. StAR continues to shape the policy discourse on asset recovery by providing empirical evidence of progress and challenges, contributing to and monitoring the development of relevant international standards, and ensuring that asset recovery and anti-corruption initiatives maintain prominence in relevant international settings.

## UN and UNCAC-related

At the **25th session of the UNCAC Training Programme** organized by the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFEI) on effective corruption investigation utilizing international cooperation, StAR presented its work on asset recovery with a focus on international cooperation.

As in previous years, StAR actively contributed to the annual sessions of the **UNCAC Working Group on Asset Recovery**. The team was involved in thematic discussions on practical aspects of asset recovery, including trends, challenges, and good practices, as well as technical assistance related to Chapter IV (international cooperation) and Chapter V (asset recovery) of the Convention. During panel discussions, StAR provided an overview of its recent publication, [Asset and Interest Disclosure: A Technical Guide to an Effective Form](#), which focuses on good practices for disclosure forms and how it informs the role of declarations in the anti-corruption value chain. StAR also presented on the technical assistance it provided to States parties in 2022, receiving positive feedback from several beneficiary countries who welcomed the support they had received, including under the GFAR Action Series, while StAR donors noted the important role StAR

plays in the implementation of Chapter V of UNCAC.

The **UNODC Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network)** held its Fourth Plenary Meeting in July to discuss topics such as how to address challenges to the exchange of information between law enforcement agencies especially through the use of technology and innovation. StAR was admitted as an Observer to the GlobE Network and the team presented to the GlobE Steering Committee on future synergies envisioned with, and through, the GlobE Network in this new capacity. In addition to providing the forum at which the GFAR Action Series was launched, the Plenary also provided StAR the opportunity to conduct in-depth interviews with select attending jurisdictions to gather information on their experiences with equivalent-value based confiscation (VBC) as a means of recovering proceeds of corruption. Some bilateral meetings between attending countries were also facilitated during this time.

The **tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP10) to UNCAC** in December, held in Atlanta, Georgia under the presidency of the United States, marked the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and provided a



Top left: StAR at the Asset Recovery Working Group. Top right: Plenary during CoSP10. Bottom left: GFAR Action Series briefing by Moldova on the margins of the 4th GlobE Plenary. Bottom right: Panelists and participants at the Conference on Tax Transparency and Corruption



platform for reflecting on lessons learned thus far. The Conference featured the sixth StAR Day special event, a full day of panels dedicated to understanding and discussing the asset recovery process. With over 2,000 participants, both in-person and online, representing 160 Member States and numerous international and

non-governmental organizations, the week-long conference saw the adoption of twelve resolutions addressing various issues such as beneficial ownership, protection of reporting persons, societal impacts of corruption, public procurement, and the links between corruption and organized crime.



StAR co-organized the **Vienna Conference on Tax Transparency and Corruption** with the WU Global Tax Policy Center at the Institute for Austrian and International Tax Law which convened over 100 senior officials from African tax and customs administrations, Financial Intelligence Units, Ministries of Finance, and Justice Departments, as well as representatives from business, academia, civil society organizations, and international and regional organizations. StAR led discussions on interagency coordination to tackle corruption, tax evasion and money laundering, and unexplained wealth orders, as new tools to overcome challenges to asset recovery. The event also discussed beneficial ownership and legal attorney-client privilege, by highlighting good practices in compliance with FATF standards and StAR and World Bank's work on these topics.



Last year, StAR continued to push the asset recovery agenda at several high-level events by contributing to the discussion on topics related to, beneficial ownership transparency, the advantages of interagency cooperation, the importance of engaging financial centers, and the need for strong evidence base related to asset recovery efforts. Over 2023, StAR engaged on anti-corruption and asset recovery with/at the following:

## Global and regional multilateral organizations and interagency networks

- **36th APEC Anti-Corruption and Transparency Expert's Working Group (ACTWG) Meeting**
- **High-Level Conference on Anti-Corruption in Africa**
- **G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group**
- **Financial Action Task Force (FATF):** StAR played an active role in the process of revising the FATF standard on beneficial ownership and developing the new guidance. At the FATF plenary in February, changes to Recommendation 25 on beneficial ownership transparency of legal arrangements were also agreed upon and a new guidance is being drafted. Throughout 2023, StAR also contributed to the revision of FATF's global standards on confiscation (Recommendation 4) and international cooperation (Recommendation 38).
- Presented on StAR's data collection exercise on cross-border asset recovery and return cases and ARW Database at the **International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre (IACCC) Associate Membership Workshop** which brings together law enforcement agencies from smaller financial centers, and participated at the **IACCC Governance Board Meeting** to showcase StAR's work and opportunities for further collaboration with IACCC
- **International Corruption Hunters Alliance (ICHA)**
- **International Seminar on Enhancing Capacity to Recover Stolen Assets in Southeast Asia** organized by the UNODC South East Asia Justice Network (SEAJust)
- Together with the World Bank Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment (MTI) GP and the IRS Criminal Investigations Unit, StAR co-organized the **Cyber NETWORK**, an international cybercrime conference held in Washington, D.C. which allowed for information exchange and networking for enforcement agencies and private sector partners
- **52nd Meeting of the Group of Experts for the Control of Money Laundering (GELAVEX)** planned by the Organization of American States (OAS)
- **The American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative's Anti-Corruption Policy, Research, Outreach and Engagement (APROE)** event on illicit financial flows
- **Sixth OECD Forum on Tax and Crime (TFTC)**
- **The African Development Bank, Office of Integrity and Anti-Corruption (PIAC)**
- **Asset Recovery Network (RRAG) of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT)**
- Presented to the **African Union Advisory Board (AUABC)** at UNODC headquarters



*A parliamentary delegation visiting Washington DC from Indonesia was presented with the StAR Award of Excellence which the Indonesian Financial Transaction Reports Analysis Center (INTRAC) (also known as PPAK) won in the 2020 Best Egmont Case Award competition but was unable to receive in-person due to COVID.*



Top: StAR at the FATF plenary. Middle: StAR at Expert Group Meeting organized by OAS. Bottom: StAR presenting during a roundtable discussion on beneficial ownership at AC4D

## AC4D Global Forum

The World Bank's Governance Global Practice, UNODC, and partners co-hosted the first **Anticorruption for Development (AC4D) Global Forum** in Washington, D.C. The Forum brought together around 150 stakeholders working on anti-corruption and integrity. The Forum supported the exchange of knowledge and experience in areas such as beneficial ownership transparency, data and technology, procurement and contract management, and accountability institutions and the rule of law. StAR presented its experiences and lessons learned in promoting the implementation of beneficial ownership transparency reforms and the establishment of beneficial ownership registers. StAR was also represented during the Forum's World Cafes which allowed participants to gain additional information on partners and projects working in the field of anti-corruption.



## StAR Day at CoSP

The [StAR Initiative Asset Recovery Day \(StAR Day\)](#) has become a traditional part of CoSP, bringing together different actors to discuss the challenges and opportunities in asset recovery. In December, this event celebrated a significant milestone: the 15th anniversary of the StAR Initiative in 2022. Notable achievements of StAR were [highlighted during the opening session](#), featuring remarks by UNODC’s Director of the Division for Treaty Affairs and World Bank’s Vice President of Integrity.

Throughout StAR Day, participants had access to live interpretation in English, Spanish, Arabic, and French, ensuring inclusivity for both in-person and virtual attendees. The event commenced with over 200 participants in-person, and over 100 connected virtually, with participation remaining strong throughout the day.

The segment began with the launch of StAR’s revamped [Asset Recovery Watch \(ARW\) Database](#), enriched with new information collected through [UNODC country surveys](#) over the past three years. This was followed by high-level interventions from co-hosts, partners, and delegates from the GFAR Action Series focus countries who showcased the results obtained so far.

Kevin Driscoll, United States Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Julien Buissart, Deputy Director for Sanctions, Economic Issues and Anti-Corruption, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France, and Margaret Adams, Head of the United Kingdom Joint Anti-Corruption Unit, [delivered remarks on behalf of the GFAR Action Series co-hosts](#). [During its intervention, the United States](#) announced the return of over USD 100 million stolen assets to three countries: over USD 100 million to Malaysia in the 1MDB case, over USD 1 million to Honduras, and approximately USD 1 million to Nigeria. During the segment, France also announced the return of over USD 150 million Abacha-related assets to Nigeria.

These announcements were followed by interventions from representatives of each GFAR Action Series focus country who shared their experiences and efforts to recover stolen assets and the impact of the GFAR Action Series in facilitating the process. The panel ended with remarks by the Deputy Chief, Financial Prosecutor of France and StAR’s partners in the GFAR Action Series, IACCC and ICAR.

The GFAR Action Series segment at StAR Day concluded with a panel which featured a presentation by the Executive Director of the African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) on the implementation of the GFAR Principles through the Mantra project in Nigeria, followed by remarks from the Head of the



Top: Part of the StAR team with WB FCI Global Director at CoSP10. Middle: StAR Day panelists during the session on tax and corruption. Bottom left: StAR booth at CoSP10. Bottom right: Participants during StAR Day.



“The special event of the StAR Initiative has become a traditional part of the Conference of the States Parties to the UNCAC, bringing together different actors to discuss the challenges to asset recovery and possible solutions. Over the years, StAR has made important contributions to the advancement of international asset recovery.”

—John Brandolino  
Director, Division for Treaty Affairs, UNODC

Prosperity and Sustainability Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and the Minister of Justice of Nigeria on the return and disposition of assets from Switzerland to Nigeria.

The StAR Day continued with a record number of thematic segments addressing issues such as transparency and accountability in asset recovery and return, the participation of civil society in asset recovery, the interlinkages between corruption and tax crimes, beneficial ownership transparency, and regional mechanisms for asset recovery and against illicit financial flows, with panelists representing government agencies, civil society organizations, research institutions, and multilateral organizations; all employed in the fight against corruption. The full agenda of the event and the recording of the various segments are available on the [StAR website](#).

During the special event, two new StAR publications, [Managing Seized and Confiscated Assets: A Guide for Practitioners](#), and [Victims of Corruption: Back for Payback](#), were launched. Of the more than 1,300 copies of StAR’s recent publications made available at a dedicated booth, only 40 copies were leftover at the end of the week, demonstrating their popularity and value to practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.

The StAR Day was co-organized with the largest and most diverse group of partners to date, making it the most comprehensive and inclusive StAR Day and international asset recovery event. A true testament to how StAR remains a convergence point for cooperation in asset recovery and leading on innovation in knowledge development.



# Management, Staffing & Funding

The StAR Initiative relies on the expertise of an international team of professional and support staff based in the World Bank offices in Washington, D.C. and Vienna, in UNODC's Corruption and Economic Crime Branch in Vienna, and UNODC field offices in Bogota and Tashkent, as well as expert consultants worldwide. StAR team members work on a full or part-time basis on StAR activities, as well as on the World Bank's AML/CFT and IFFs activities and on UNODC's work in support of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The StAR Secretariat is based in the Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice of the World Bank HQ and comprises World Bank and UNODC staff and consultants. The core team manages the Trust Fund's workplans and management of the StAR program, including strategy related to the Initiative, with the World Bank team members also overseeing management of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

StAR's funding derives from the Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) and the World Bank global engagement

budget and other Bank lending projects,\* as well as the UNODC Global Program to Prevent and Combat Corruption. The MDTF covers a portion of fixed costs (World Bank staff), a range of variable costs (travel, meetings, workshops, communications, and consultants) and the production of StAR material (publications). UNODC's Global Program contributes to the costs of seconded UNODC staff, other UNODC staff time and selected StAR activities. In 2023, the MDTF had contributions from Switzerland and the United States, while Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland and the United States contributed to the UNODC budget for StAR activities.

In June, StAR reached the end disbursement date of its old MDTF and switched operations to a fresh Multi-Donor Trust Fund with a new governance structure in line with changes made to Trust Fund policies at the World Bank in 2021. The new StAR II MDTF was established with legacy funds from the previous financing instrument and contributions from Switzerland as the first development partner. StAR is in discussions with multiple prospective donors to sign on in the new year.

## StAR Initiative Secretariat Team



**Emile Van Der Does De Willebois**  
Coordinator  
Lead Financial Sector Specialist,  
World Bank



**Sol Krause**  
Financial Sector Specialist,  
World Bank



**Roberta Solis Ribeiro Martins**  
Crime Prevention and Criminal  
Justice Officer, UNODC



**Neha Maryam Zaigham**  
Communications and Monitoring  
and Evaluation Officer, World Bank



**Elsa Gopala-Krishnan**  
Crime Prevention and Criminal  
Justice Officer, UNODC

\* The Global Tax Program through the World Bank Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment (MTI) GP and the FCDO-funded World Bank project on anticorruption and asset recovery through the Governance (GOV) GP

Website

2023 statistics

159,395  
page views

27,137  
file downloads

92,572  
unique visitors

- Top 5 countries
- United States
  - India
  - United Kingdom
  - Nigeria
  - South Africa

Top 3 downloads

StAR Asset Recovery Watch Database file

Twitter/X

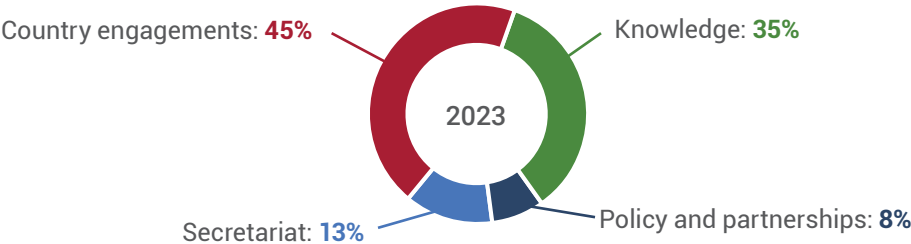
2023 statistics

730+  
new followers

53,000+  
impressions

3%  
engagement

World Bank MDTF Disbursement Breakdown by work pillar, Jan–Dec 2022



Total expenditures from the MDTF in CY2023: \$1,498,940

Our sincere gratitude goes out to our donors



Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)\*; Government of Luxembourg\*; Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)\*; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); U.S. State Department Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)  
\*Contribution only through UNODC



[star.worldbank.org](http://star.worldbank.org)

