

V. Set Up South Sudan Forum on Asset Recovery

South Sudan should request that the World Bank resume and broaden the work of the Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative (StAR) to investigate and return stolen state resources.⁸⁰ As part of a new South Sudan Forum on Asset Recovery (SSFAR), the R-TGoNU should engage with community leaders and civil society to integrate the public's interest in providing evidence of wrongdoing and investigating egregious acts of corruption. Because asset recovery initiatives are typically hosted outside the target country, the United States should host the forum to trace the money that has been parked outside South Sudan.

How would this action improve economic governance?

An international effort to investigate stolen financial assets, including the proceeds of embezzlement, bribery, and other serious crimes, would help turn the page on the rampant corruption that defined the early years of the country. The corrupt nature of the system must change before an accountable and equitable economy will emerge—one that creates jobs, attracts foreign investments, and expands economic inclusion.

- Given that officials have strategically moved vast assets out of the country, proactive international engagement on the recovery of assets is critical for the return of stolen funds. The R-TGoNU—South Sudan's three main oversight committees, in particular—would have the full scope of international resources, under the SSFAR, to recover stolen assets.
- The SSFAR would provide a channel for civil society to rally support for a range of anti-corruption measures. In the forum, grassroots communities would have the chance to decide which investigations are highest priorities. A coalition of South Sudanese civil society should also lead strategies for returning stolen assets to victims and to fund civil society oversight.
- The R-TGoNU's commitment to the SSFAR would demonstrate an urgency to identify stolen assets, recognize the devastating role corruption has had on the country, and commit to anti-corruption reforms.

Has this policy worked?

StAR investigators' previous work in South Sudan stalled during the early violence of the war, but a broader scope would rally international support for renewed investigations. For example, the Ukraine Forum on Asset Recovery (UFAR) brought together international partners from across the world, hosted in the United Kingdom.⁸¹ UFAR facilitated international cooperation to trace and freeze assets, receive technical support, and build networks to recover assets across jurisdictions. In a citizen-run anti-corruption drive last year, South African civil society organized the independent "People's Tribunal on Economic Crimes" to collect evidence on corruption and state capture to raise national and international awareness and hold the government accountable.⁸²

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What are the steps to implementation?

The SSFAR would be consistent with the R-ARCSS and would serve as a way for South Sudan to tap into the international expertise and existing frameworks to recover assets and combat corruption. The R-ARCSS outlines steps for the establishment of the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA)⁸³ and instructs the R-TGoNU to accede to the African Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPC) and the U.N. Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).⁸⁴

- **South Sudan:** Following an official request for the World Bank to restart the StAR's work, South Sudan's civil society should step up to lead the public's engagement with the SSFAR team and channel the asset returns into a trust fund.
- **IGAD, AU, United Nations:** StAR and the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) should prioritize the investigation with engagement from the R-TGoNU. The AU should ensure that the SSFAR works alongside the AU Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS), which is geared toward transitional justice for those responsible for serious atrocities and high crimes during the war.⁸⁵
- **International Partners, Donors:** International jurisdictions that might hold stolen assets should appoint investigators dedicated to working on South Sudan to begin the process of sharing information with anti-corruption advocates. Leadership from anti-corruption investigators in the United States, which should offer to host the forum, would rally broader international support for the SSFAR.