

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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CiFAR was founded in 2015 to support civil society to campaign across borders to prevent public asset theft and for accountable and transparent asset recovery.

Our mission is to amplify the voice of civil society worldwide on stolen assets, to support civil society across the globe to be a strong and effective actor on stolen asset recovery and to close the gap missing in global civil society asset recovery work.

Credits

Cover photo: Martina Della Valle

June 2019

OVERVIEW

Berlin, 20 June 2019

2018 was a year of many notable successes for CiFAR. In our second full year of establishment, we built a stronger community of global activists, civil society organisations and journalists fighting cross-border corruption and working on transparent and accountable stolen asset recovery.

Our targets were ambitious and set against a challenging global political context. While the aftermaths of the Panama and Paradise Papers and the Global Forum for Asset Recovery in December 2017 presented potential for policy reform and to advance asset recovery cases, there are indications that the fight against global financial secrecy and international money laundering is going too slowly, and sometimes backwards. Investigative journalists and activists face serious risks more now than ever before in recent years for exposing corrupt networks and the structures that allows them to flourish.

At CiFAR we saw some important internal developments that allowed us to make important contributions when facing these challenges. We grew significantly as an organisation, building on the efforts made in 2017, both financially and in visibility to external stakeholders. Our income for activities increased from €54 thousand in 2017 to €79 thousand in 2018, with five major international donors supporting us, paving the way for long-term sustainability of our work. Through numerous country visits and many other contacts, our knowledge on the needs and strengths of global civil society working on asset recovery, especially from asset-sending countries, improved significantly, allowing us to develop tailored training and mentoring to both journalists and CSOs worldwide.

With the second phase of the project *Investigate the Mediterranean* CiFAR made an important impact thanks to our continued cooperation with the young investigative journalists we trained in 2017. The group was able to produce first-hand, quality investigations revealing cross-border corruption in healthcare dealings between Germany and Libya and identifying problems in the sanctions regimes applied to against North African former dictators in the British Virgin Islands and France. Similarly, the group of young people we trained in 2017 under the project *Illicit Financial Flows and German Development* was able to produce materials and conduct campaigns that raised the awareness on the role of Germany as safe haven for illicit flows from developing countries and the needs for reform. CiFAR also contributed to spreading knowledge around asset recovery issues and on country case analysis, thanks to the production of research papers, reports and case studies.

OVERVIEW

At the global level, we continued our engagement with international networks to advance the global asset recovery agenda: we worked with other NGO groups to develop global principles for accountable asset return and, ensuring that asset recovery focuses on victim compensation and the social re-use of returned assets. CiFAR was also represented in various international conferences, where we showed decision-makers how we think civil society can and should be involved in asset recovery.

While we are still a small organisation, 2018 it made it clear that CiFAR is able to produce impact in exposing and raising awareness on cross-border corruption and on transparent and accountable asset recovery, at the same time moving towards long-term sustainability. A now well-known and respected organisation among asset recovery practitioners, CiFAR is in a much stronger position than before to support more and more organisations across the globe to work on asset recovery, contributing to starting investigations and prosecutions on asset theft and ensuring that asset returns are transparent, accountable and focused on the victims of corruption.

Looking ahead, 2019 will be a key year for us to fulfil the ambitious goals we set in our first strategy 2016-2019. In this, we will give high priority to our support to NGOs on their advocacy work on asset recovery through dedicated training, as well as to continuing our cooperation and support to investigative journalists. 2019 will also see the development of CiFAR's next strategy 2020-2022.

We wish to thank our supporters in 2018 and those who believed in us and look forward to an even more successful 2019!

The CiFAR team



RESULTS AREA I

DEVELOPING THE EXPERTISE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF NON-STATE ACTORS TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN ASSET RECOVERY

This results area is designed to address the lack of expertise and/or knowledge in non-state actors, in particular civil society organisations and investigative journalists, in the complexities of the public asset theft and recovery process. Through developing the expertise of non-state actors, this results area is also designed to strengthen the expertise of governments in preventing asset theft and in the recovery of stolen assets, through enabling civil society to provide the blueprints for reform and to provide informed and constructive advice to government officials.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Training and mentoring of investigative journalists from the North and South of the Mediterranean
- Supporting the publication of four investigative stories on cross-border corruption
- Mapping civil society engagement, strengths and needs on asset recovery in six key countries, expansion of our CSO database
- In-depth country analysis of cross-border corruption and asset recovery frameworks in Yemen, Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mexico and Malaysia
- Support to young activist led research studies on the role of Germany for illicit financial flows, organised crime and reform

During the second phase of the project supported by the GIZ, the journalists met again and, through CiFAR's mentoring identified and produced new stories on cross-border corruption and asset recovery between North Africa and Europe, including on Germany, Libya, UK, France and Switzerland.

The journalists are now part of CiFAR's network and will be involved in new investigations in the future as well as in participating in training programmes for journalists from other regions.

German Development and illicit financial flows: closing the gap

In 2018, we continued our work with young activists and development workers living in Germany to raise awareness about illicit financial flows and the role of Germany in hiding them. The group worked closely with CiFAR to conduct research and social media campaigns as well as a public event in Berlin. More information can be found on the project website:

<http://steuerparadiesdeutschland.de>
(in German)

DETAILED RESULTS

Investigate the Mediterranean

After the training phase in 2017 and early 2018, we worked closely with a group of investigative journalists from North Africa and Europe to provide them with skills to investigate cross-border corruption.



RESULTS AREA I

DEVELOPING THE EXPERTISE, KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS OF NON-STATE ACTORS TO PLAY AN EFFECTIVE ROLE IN ASSET RECOVERY

Mapping of civil society organisations

As NGOs and activists are on one of CiFAR's key strategic targets, in 2018 we began a mapping of the needs and strengths of NGOs working on asset recovery and grand corruption. Thanks to a cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, we travelled to six countries key for asset recovery and grand corruption (Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Malaysia, Romania and Mexico) and assessed the framework of civil society work in asset recovery there.

With this research, we expanded our NGO database, which we are using to build our plans for work with civil society worldwide. Through each of the country visits we also established excellent contacts with NGOs and other actors, paving the way for future cooperation in each of these countries.

Research

In 2018, we produced in-depth country analysis of cross-border corruption and asset recovery in Yemen, Moldova, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mexico and Malaysia. The studies look at major corruption cases, the status of asset recovery and anti-corruption and asset recovery frameworks, as well as providing recommendations for civil society engagement in each country.

Supporting young activists, we also published their research about the role of Germany as a safe haven for illicit financial flows and for organised crime, and provided recommendations for anti-money laundering and asset recovery reforms needed to stop this.

Two important research projects kicked off in the second half of 2018, funded by the NED and GIZ: the first focussing on the EU misappropriation sanctions and their flaws, with an in-depth study and a new online tool making data and information about the sanctions system more accessible to stakeholders. The second project focuses on identifying and describing asset recovery cases and estimates of hidden assets in Germany. The studies will be published in 2019.

FIND OUT MORE

- Read about our work with journalists [here](#)
- Read about our youth work [here](#)
- Find our latest research [here](#)



RESULTS AREA II

ENABLING STRONGER CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION OF NON-STATE ACTORS TO FIGHT AGAINST STATE ASSET THEFT AND FOR ASSET RECOVERY

This results area is designed to address the difficulties civil society, investigative journalists and other non-state actors face in working on asset recovery outside their national context. While public asset theft is a global issue, networks and advocacy to end this practice tends not to be. Through expanding networks against asset theft, this results area is designed to lay the groundwork for increasing cross-border collaboration.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Cross-border cooperation among journalists on uncovering corruption between North Africa and Europe
- Engaging in civil society asset recovery coalitions
- Speaking and participating in international asset recovery asset recovery

DETAILED RESULTS

Cross-border investigative journalism

In the framework of the project *Investigate the Mediterranean*, 20 journalists worked together, connecting the southern and northern sides of the Mediterranean as well as countries of origin and destination of stolen assets, to investigate cases of asset theft and asset recovery together.

Thanks to this cooperation, the journalists were able to publish four new investigations.

Conferences

As part of our work to ensure more civil society participation on global asset recovery issues, we participated in several conferences discussing asset recovery internationally in 2018.

- In cooperation with the GIZ, we organised a workshop at the [18th International Anti-corruption Conference](#) between 22nd and 24th of October 2018 in Copenhagen. During the workshop, which hosted investigative journalists from Egypt, Germany, France and Ukraine, we explored how journalists can work in difficult environments, with limited resources, and how new initiatives can support investigative journalists to have even greater impact.
- During a visit to Abuja, Nigeria CiFAR presented best practices and recommendations of civil society engagement during a nation-wide civil society conference on asset recovery, with over 100 participants.

Working groups

- In the aftermaths of the Global Asset Recovery Conference in Washington in December 2017, we continued working with various NGO groups on key asset recovery issues such as global principles and transparent asset return.
- We also participated continued our participation in the civil society working group on Uzbekistan. This group aims to coordinate a civil society response to the ongoing returns process to Uzbekistan and to ensure that the voices of independent Uzbekistan civil society are heard in this process. In July 2018 we led sessions in a working group meeting of this group in Brussels.



RESULTS AREA III

BUILDING STRONG CAMPAIGNS TO CHALLENGE THE IMPUNITY OF INDIVIDUALS FOR STATE ASSET THEFT

This results area is designed to bring together and amplify the voices of non-state actors to challenge the foundations of asset theft and to hold accountable those who are involved. We seek to push governments to take action against the asset theft chain, to make it more difficult for private institutions to facilitate and accept stolen assets and to empower those who support our cause.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Advocacy on global principles for accountable asset return
- Broadening our audience and engaging new people on asset recovery

DETAILED RESULTS

Public activism

Our work in this area included both our own outreach and work to support others. In 2018, we organised public events to raise awareness on asset recovery and illicit financial flows, social media campaigns on different topics and published a number of blog articles and other materials on our website.

A **workshop on illicit financial flows** organised by a group of volunteering activists' resident in Germany in June 2018 saw some of the most prominent experts on illicit financial flows and tax evasion in Germany presenting the problematic role of Germany. The event was attended by over 40 people and was held at the Berlin Center for Political Education.

In the context of our work with investigative journalists, we organised a **public event** in November 2018 in cooperation with GIZ, where journalists from North Africa and Europe presented the results of their joint work and we debated with senior experts about the future of investigative journalism and its role in asset recovery.

CiFAR also launched a **new subdomain of our website: "Investigate"**, which aims to provide a platform for our work with investigative journalists: <http://investigate.cifar.eu>

As CiFAR we engaged **over 5,500** unique visitors on asset recovery through our website, many of whom were channelled through our social media work.

Over 2018, we produced **thirteen blog articles**, covering topics around EU sanctions, Nigerian assets return, grand corruption and asset recovery in Ukraine, Malaysia, Egypt and Equatorial Guinea.

FIND OUT MORE

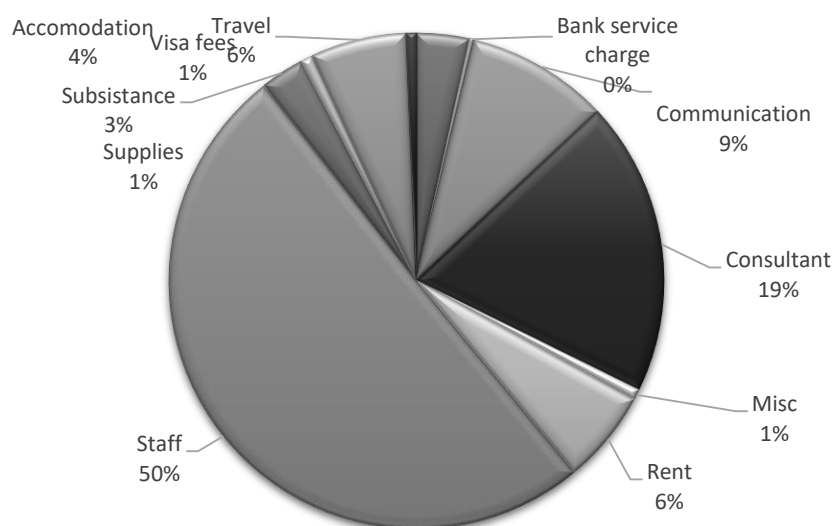
- Read our latest blogs [here](#)
- See our global work [here](#)

FINANCES AND SUPPORT

WE HOLD GOVERNMENTS TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN OUR WORK. THOSE STANDARDS APPLY TO US TOO.

Overall situation	€
Cash in hand at year begin	4,036.92
Total income	79,478.09
Total expenses	58,099.79
Cash in hand at year end	25,415.22

EXPENDITURE BY TYPE



FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to ask us any questions about our accounts, please contact us at info@cifar.eu

PRINCIPLE DONORS

In addition to individual donations, we are grateful for the support of the following donors in 2018:



Implemented by **giz**



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