FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION

What will it take to make CAPAR work?

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AARP Forum General Assembly | Abuja | 17 November 2026

Initial remarks: 12 minutes

1. Opening message - 1 minute

Chair, distinguished panellists and colleagues,

For civil society, the test of the Common African Position on Asset Recovery is whether it changes what happens to stolen assets and to the people harmed by corruption.

We must measure success through the integrity of the recovery process, the transparency of asset management and the benefits that reach citizens.

Recovering money is an important milestone. Ensuring that citizens benefit is the ultimate purpose.

I will focus on two questions: what meaningful civil society participation looks like, and how that participation can help turn recovered assets into public benefit.

2. What meaningful inclusion should look like - 3 minutes

Civil society should participate throughout the asset recovery process: shaping policy, contributing evidence through appropriate channels, informing return arrangements, monitoring management and use, and assessing results.

Meaningful inclusion requires practical arrangements:

- **Early engagement:** Consult civil society and affected communities while return agreements and spending priorities are being developed, when their contributions can still influence decisions.
- **Clear responsibilities:** Establish written arrangements defining access to information, monitoring roles, reporting procedures and how institutions will respond to findings.
- **Timely disclosure:** Provide return agreements, asset inventories, budgets, procurement information, expenditure reports and audit findings, with narrowly justified safeguards for sensitive information.
- **Independent scrutiny:** Civil society monitors must be able to publish findings, raise concerns and question decisions without interference.
- **Community participation:** Affected people should help identify priorities, assess delivery and report problems through accessible complaints mechanisms.
- **Resources and protection:** Monitoring requires trained people, field access and sustainable funding. Those reporting wrongdoing also need protection.

An invitation to a conference is a useful beginning. Meaningful participation gives civil society a continuing role, access to evidence and a response to its recommendations.

3. What MANTRA teaches us - 3 minutes

Nigeria's experience offers practical lessons through ANEEJ's MANTRA initiative: Monitoring of Recovered Assets in Nigeria through Transparency and Accountability.

In January 2018, ANEEJ signed a memorandum of understanding with the Federal Ministry of Justice to independently monitor the use of **US$322.5 million in recovered Abacha assets**, allocated to the cash transfer programme.

Our monitoring combined national engagement with community verification. The MANTRA presentation records eight partner organisations, a network of more than 114 CSOs and over 1,456 field monitors.

Three lessons stand out.

First, formal arrangements make participation operational.

The memorandum provided a basis for engagement with government and for following the money beyond the announcement of its return.

Second, national records must be checked against people's experiences.

A payment recorded in a database does not answer every accountability question. Did the intended recipient receive it? Was the full amount paid? Were there unauthorised deductions? Could the recipient complain safely?

The MANTRA presentation documents monitoring findings that contributed to corrective action, including refunds of unlawful deductions in Gombe State and action concerning officials implicated in irregularities.

Third, monitoring should lead to remedies.

Publishing a report is only part of the work. Findings should trigger investigation, repayment where appropriate, changes in delivery systems and feedback to affected communities.

These results require sustained engagement. They depend on public institutions responding to evidence, alongside the work of monitors and communities.

The lesson for CAPAR is to build independent monitoring and a response mechanism into asset return arrangements from the outset.

4. Applying the approach to infrastructure - 1 minute

Our Bayelsa experience illustrates how monitoring can extend to infrastructure financed by recovered assets.

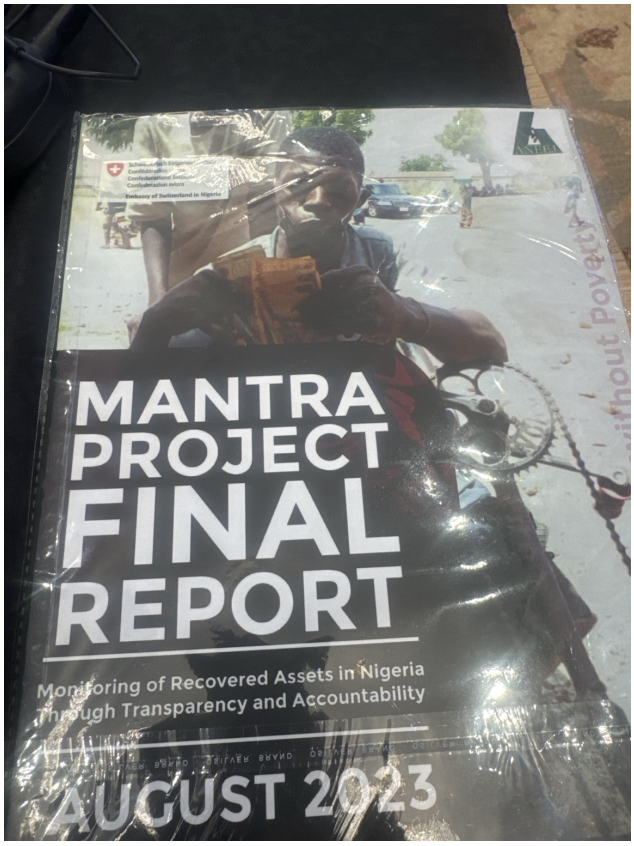
For the **US$954,807.40 linked to former Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha**, ANEEJ's work has included stakeholder engagement, procurement tracking, training and baseline assessment of eight primary healthcare centres across eight local government areas.

The questions are practical:

- What was the condition of each facility before the intervention?
- What improvements were promised and contracted?
- What has been delivered?
- Are facilities equipped, staffed and usable by the communities they serve?

We must distinguish procurement progress, completed construction and functioning services. Each requires its own evidence.

MANTRA evidence and knowledge products



MANTRA Project Final Report, August 2023



Knowledge products and recommendations from the MANTRA report

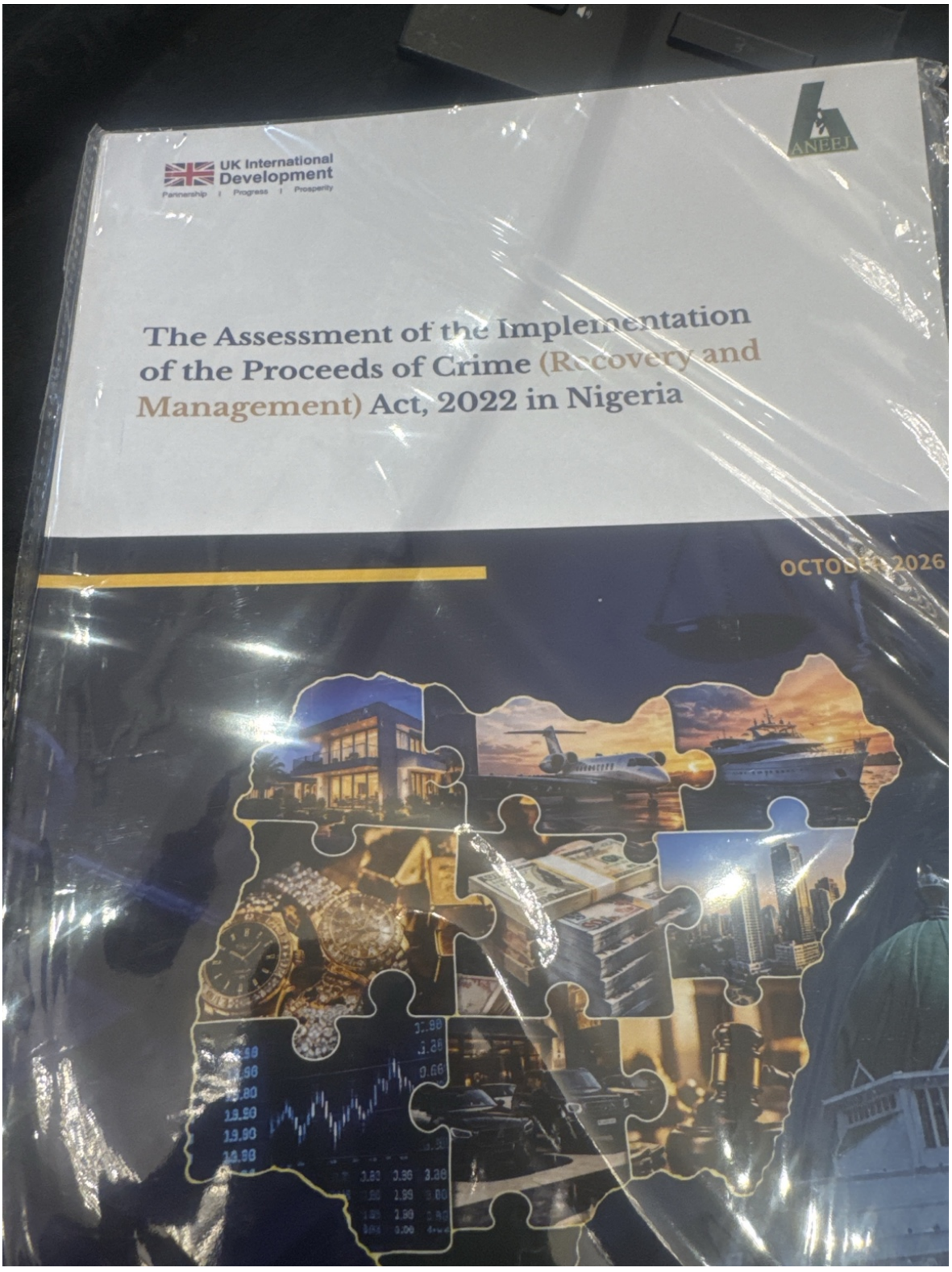
Documenting monitoring experience helps civil society share evidence and support accountability in recovered asset management.

Community experience in the MANTRA report



Beneficiary payment photograph reproduced in the MANTRA final report, page 31.

Assessing implementation of asset recovery law



ANEEJ assessment of the implementation of the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Act, 2022 in Nigeria, October 2026.

5. Five commitments to make CAPAR work - 3 minutes

I propose that this General Assembly advance five commitments for the next 12 months.

One: establish structured civil society engagement.

The AARP Forum and AUABC should establish regular dialogue with the NSA Forum and relevant civil society networks, with clear focal points, advance notice of consultations and documented follow-up.

Two: agree a minimum disclosure framework.

Countries should publish information that allows citizens to follow assets from recovery and return through allocation, expenditure and results. Where disclosure is restricted, institutions should explain the reason and provide a route for review.

Three: include independent monitoring in return arrangements.

Agreements should define information access, community engagement, reporting, complaints and institutional responses. The same transparency expectations should apply when international organisations manage or implement programmes financed by returned assets.

Management and overhead charges should be **disclosed, justified, proportionate and independently reviewable**. Any proposed ceiling should specify which costs it covers and how exceptions would be authorised.

Four: turn CAPAR commitments into measurable national plans.

Plans should identify responsible institutions, budgets, deadlines and indicators. Civil society can contribute independent evidence, including through the CAPAR Assessment Tools discussed at our strategy meeting.

Five: report publicly on delivery and corrective action.

Progress reporting should cover recovered amounts, asset management, expenditure, benefits, complaints and responses. Independent civil society findings should inform these reviews.

The Interim Council of the NSA Forum can help coordinate country contributions, consolidate shared priorities and maintain engagement with AUABC and the AARP Forum, while preserving organisations' ability to present independent views.

6. Closing - 1 minute

Civil society brings community relationships, independent evidence and sustained public scrutiny to asset recovery.

Our task is to make that contribution useful and measurable: clearer information, earlier detection of problems, corrective action and demonstrable benefits for citizens.

My request to this General Assembly is to support a practical framework connecting **CAPAR implementation, public disclosure, independent monitoring and community participation**, with named responsibilities and a date for reviewing progress.

When we next meet, we should be able to explain what was recovered, how it was managed, who benefited and what changed because citizens were involved.

Thank you.