



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

Dear members, patrons and interested parties,

**The year 2024 was another year of change and renewal.**

The board made extensive efforts to put support for the indigenous communities in the Chaco on a sustainable footing. Land claims and the protection of forest and habitat were always at the center of these efforts.

Numerous discussions were held with representatives of the communities in Chaidi and Arocognadi. Other stakeholders also contributed to the development of the new strategy. In October, Claudio Losa and Hans Weenink travelled to Paraguay to meet with various people and, of course, with the representatives of the communities.

### **Review of 2024**

In 2024, the association worked towards its three main goals (land protection, health, legal support). In some cases, due to a lack of direct representation on the ground, it was necessary to switch to direct payments to the communities. This sometimes led to disagreements within the communities, as everyone would have liked to manage the direct payments themselves. We are therefore pleased that this situation has now been addressed (see next chapter).

Nevertheless, the communities were able to organize a number of monitoring trips. Illegal land occupation and deforestation were documented and recorded using GPS data which can be used as evidence in court. These trips are particularly important as there is a risk that the less frequented an area appears the more illegal activities will take place.

In addition, thanks to Dr. Fernando Elias, basic medical care was also maintained. Sick people were provided with medication and transferred to hospital in cases of acute danger. The association hopes to keep these costs as low as possible in the future with additional investments in prevention. Finally, during the presidium's visit in October, new contacts were made to plan for the future and find new local partners.

The presidium met with NGOs from Paraguay that have the potential to support local projects, monitor financing, and provide us with accountability reports on expenditures and goal achievement. The board was informed of the results of the trip and decided to start an experimental cooperation with the EAMI organization in 2025. For the time being, EAMI will coordinate the monitoring inspection-trip-project for an initial period of six months. After that, the board will consult with the leaders to make improvements where necessary.

As part of the reorientation process, the board also discussed the following slightly updated strategy:

## **The updated strategy**

The new strategy defines how we intend to provide targeted support for land claims and forest protection in the coming years. This should help to create a new common direction for our activities. It should be even more closely aligned with the needs of the community residents than before and give them the opportunity for greater self-determination.

### **Vision of the Association**

Our vision is for the Ayoreo-Totobiegosode community in the Chaco to have a recognized and protected national park. In the future, the state should finance this protection and compensate the indigenous community for their services, for example as rangers. In addition, there are opportunities to create sustainable local sources of income, the use of which will be decided by the indigenous inhabitants themselves.

### **Objectives of the Association**

1. The Association advocates for the recognition and protection of the land rights of indigenous communities in the Paraguayan Chaco. It strengthens their position as guardians of the land and promotes their active participation in nature conservation.
2. The association works to preserve and protect large areas of forest in the Paraguayan Chaco in order to conserve biodiversity and the ecosystem – including areas that are already protected and acquired.
3. Promotion of education within the indigenous community in both traditional and western knowledge.
4. Improvement of health care within the communities, including health insurance (state or local) and preventive measures against lifestyle diseases such as type 2 Diabetes.

## **Measures**

Each objective is supported by concrete measures that we implement together with indigenous communities and local partners:

- Regular patrols in the area to document potential violations. A presence on the ground is an important part of prevention. This is currently being organized by EAMI, after which an internal evaluation will take place.
- Legal support is to be provided comprehensively again. To this end, it is planned that lawyer Julio Duarte will be able to play a role again, possibly in collaboration with the current lawyer, Oscar Ayala.
- Dr. Fernando Elias, a medical doctor in Asunción, has drawn up a long-term health plan and put together a team of volunteer medical assistants. The focus is on prevention. The aim is to visit the communities regularly, gain their trust, and build on this to obtain the legitimacy to implement preventive measures.
- Dr. Julio Duarte, a lawyer in Asunción, is mentoring five young indigenous people who want to pursue an education. They attend a school in Filadelfia (Chaco). We provide them with financial support, for example for school supplies and other costs that their families cannot afford.

## Finances

In 2024, both the association and the foundation's revenues were lower than hoped for. Fundraising is becoming increasingly difficult: on the one hand, potential donors are imposing stricter requirements for funding applications, and on the other hand, our capacities are limited.

With a clear strategy and targeted sub-projects, we are striving to achieve higher revenues again in the future.

### Some figures from 2024 compared to 2023 for the Association and Foundation combined

	in CHF	2024	2023
Total income		62 134.11	222 356.22
Total expenses		68 599.73	173 988.01
Total profit / loss		- 6 465.62	48 368.21

### Funds used for:

	in CHF	2024	2023
Forest protection		21 832	60 096
Health		14 500	84 493
Satellite images		8 585	7 620
Legal support		0	7 841
Training young people		1 200	0
Administration, government fees		6 197	6 513

## Challenges

Some challenges we faced in 2024 and are likely to continue facing:

- Ongoing threat from external actors claiming indigenous land
- Lack of support from Paraguayan authorities
- Climate change, flooding, and droughts
- Economic hardship due to limited sources of income in the communities
- Disagreement within the communities about their future and how it should be shaped

## Confidence for the future

However, one thing is clear to the board: we remain committed to our work with indigenous communities. We want to support these communities in building a self-determined life and show young people perspectives that will give them as much freedom as possible to make decisions about their own lives in the future. Our goals are clear, and we are convinced that we can make further progress.

Our focus in 2025 will be on:

- strengthening our partnerships in Paraguay
- increasing our efforts to gain more support from public authorities
- the targeted expansion of our projects
- promoting sustainable sources of income

## **Conclusion and acknowledgements**

The year 2024 was marked by progress and challenges. We remain committed to land rights and the protection of nature and habitat.

We would like to thank our institutional donors and patrons, communities, church congregations, foundations, and other supporters. Special thanks go to Peter and Alfred Sawatzky, who tirelessly invest their time in satellite monitoring and geotechnology.

Finally, on behalf of the indigenous people of the Paraguayan Chaco, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all of you - **our dear members, patrons, sponsors, and supporters** - for your continued and generous support! As you already know, it is only thanks to you that we can continue this work.

(... And of course, we have enclosed a payment slip ...)

Best regards,  
May 2025

Hans Weenink, President

Claudio Losa, Vice President