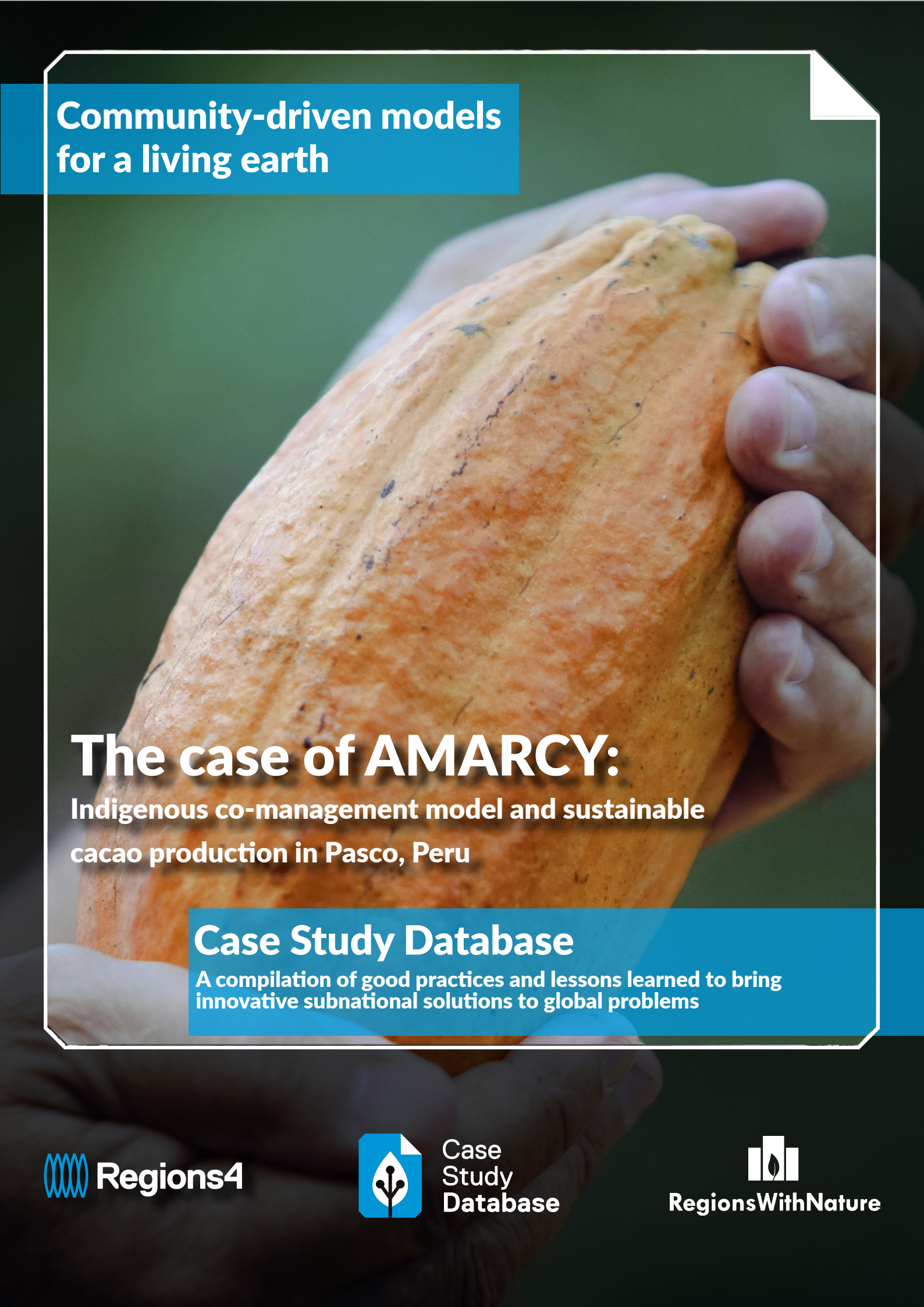




**Community-driven models
for a living earth**

The case of AMARCY:

**Indigenous co-management model and sustainable
cacao production in Pasco, Peru**

Case Study Database

**A compilation of good practices and lessons learned to bring
innovative subnational solutions to global problems**

Introducción

Indigenous communities worldwide face the dual challenge of conserving biodiversity while securing sustainable livelihoods. In Peru, the Yanesha people have pioneered a co-management approach through AMARCY, the Association for the Management and Conservation of the Yanesha Communal Reserve. Working alongside SERNANP, the national agency for protected areas, AMARCY has developed a co-management model that balances environmental stewardship with economic opportunity, leveraging traditional knowledge and innovative agroforestry practices to protect over 75,000 hectares of ancestral territory.

Project overview

The AMARCY/SERNANP co-management model is based on an administrative contract that grants AMARCY the status of “contract administrator” and recognises the rights of the Yanesha communities to manage the natural resources of the Yanesha Communal Reserve (RCYAN), provided they comply with the contract’s obligations. These obligations include annual planning, technical supervision, and inclusive decision-making.

The model’s main activities focus on the sustainable cultivation of native Eshpe cacao within agroforestry systems, supported by market integration through its commercial branch, Kowen Poetsath SAC. This approach ensures both biodiversity conservation and the generation of community income, setting a precedent for Indigenous-led conservation in Peru.

Key information

Location: District of Palcazú, Province of Oxapampa, Department of Pasco, Peru

Focus areas: Indigenous co-management of protected areas, sustainable agroforestry, value chain optimisation, biodiversity conservation

Investment: Donations from BOS+, DRIS, USAID, UNDP. Commercial sales through Kowen Poetsath SAC totalled \$104,593 between 2023 and 2024.

Sustainable Development Goals addressed:

SDG 1, 2, 8, 12, 13 and, 15

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework targets addressed:

Targets: 3, 8, 11 and 22

Author

Regions4, with the support of CONGOPE, and based on the presentation by AMARCY at the Breakthrough Workshop on Indigenous Economy and Just

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background and Context	5
Key Activities and Innovations	6
Environmental considerations	7
Sustainability and challenges	8
Partnerships	9
Lessons learned and the role of subnational governments	10
References	11
About Regions4	13

Special collection

This case study is part of a special collection developed by Regions4 as part of its work on

Just Resilience

With the support of CONGOPE, its goal is to highlight Indigenous and community-based economic models that integrate sustainable practices, ancestral knowledge and collective organisation, and that actively contribute to environmental conservation and territorial resilience.

These experiences were identified during the Breakthrough Workshop on Indigenous Economy and Just Resilience held in Napo (Ecuador) in January 2025.

The case studies include practical recommendations for subnational governments to recognise, strengthen, and collaborate with these models through their public policies, fostering a fairer, more inclusive transition in harmony with nature.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

AMARCY (Association for the Management and Conservation of the Yanesha Communal Reserve) is an indigenous organisation that has served as the contract administrator (ECA) of the Yanesha Communal Reserve (RCYAN) since 2006. **RCYAN is the oldest communal reserve in Peru, established within the National System of State-Protected Natural Areas (SINANPE) in 1988.** It covers an area of 34,744.70 hectares; including its associated areas, AMARCY protects a total of over 75,000 hectares. AMARCY collaborates with the National Service of State-Protected Natural Areas (SERNANP) to jointly manage RCYAN. **AMARCY represents 10 native Yanesha communities and 6 annexed communities associated with the Yanesha ethnicity.**

The legal status of RCYAN recognises the rights of the Yanesha communities to manage the natural resources in the area. **AMARCY has developed a model centred on the sustainable cultivation of native Eshpe cacao, integrated within agroforestry systems that include native timber species.** AMARCY also operates a commercial branch, Kowen Poetsath SAC, which markets dried cacao beans from member communities, strengthening market access. This has proven to be highly profitable for the community, especially through the integration of high -value-added activities such as marketing their own chocolate brands. Additionally, AMARCY has developed technical skills to ensure the sustainability of its cacao production.



Photo: ECA Amarcy

KEY ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES

The Indigenous model presented in this document is a co-management approach exemplified by the collaboration between AMARCY and SERNANP. **According to the administrative contract signed with the Peruvian State in 2006, the contract administrator (ECA) — in this case, AMARCY — has 22 obligations, 2 of which are shared with SERNANP. These obligations ensure that the management of RCYAN remains transparent, participatory and effective.** They include approving the annual budget and the master plan at the General Assembly, leading a technical team that includes Indigenous experts, submitting annual and five-year reports to SERNANP, and ensuring the participation of local populations. **The administrative contract signed in 2006 is indefinite and based on the Special Administration Regime for Communal Reserves.**

As previously mentioned, AMARCY's key activities include the cultivation of native Eshpe cacao alongside native timber species such as Quillosisa and Marupa within agroforestry systems. These typically involve intercropping

techniques or nitrogen fixation, among others. Trees in these agroforestry systems are pruned to allow more sunlight to reach the cacao plants, thereby increasing production. **It has been demonstrated that these agroforestry systems and their associated techniques are effective in protecting and restoring the environment in which they are implemented.**

In partnership with Sustainable Rural Development (DRIS), AMARCY developed an agroecological technical package for managing CCN 51 and fine/aromatic cacao crops. This package is based on meteorological data collected from an on-site weather station, as well as on the chemical and biological characteristics of the soil, including continuous monitoring of soil fertility and the application of mycorrhizal fungi to improve nutrient uptake.

AMARCY's commercial branch, Kowen Poetsath SAC, purchases, processes and sells dried cacao beans from member communities. While exporting raw materials such as cacao is generally a low value-added activity, it also capitalises on

higher value-added activities through the marketing of chocolate products under the “Eshpe” and “Koyanesha” brands. These brands are registered with Peru's Intellectual Property Office (INDECOPi) and hold a “Conservation Allies” certification from SERNANP. **In 2019, AMARCY became the first Indigenous organisation to win the National Quality Cacao Competition with its Eshpe cacao.**

Recent achievements include signing a management contract in 2023 for Yanachaga Chemillén National Park and the San Matías-San Carlos Protectionve Forest, in consortium with the Asháninka Communities Association of the Pichis Valley (ANAP) and DRIS. In 2020, AMARCY also successfully implemented a comprehensive surveillance strategy for RCYAN and its associated annexed communities. This included accrediting 51 community rangers who are certified in the use and operation of drones. AMARCY is also the first ECA to become a member of the International Ranger Federation (IRF).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Yanesha people of Peru have long cultivated native Eshpe cacao in their communal forests, although it has only recently been recognised as a unique cacao variety. **The native community of Alto Iscozacín was the first to identify its value.** By sustainably managing native cacao varieties – both fine-flavoured and common – the Yanesha are increasing household incomes, protecting ancestral forests, and supporting deforestation-free, low-emission value chains.

AMARCY is committed to preventing deforestation in its territories, a commitment recognised by Peru's National Forestry Programme as one that helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement. As part of the initiative "Our Forests of the Future – Green Amazon," 100 Yanesha families are working towards organic and fair-trade certification, which will enable them to access premium markets.

This project, led by Conservation International with support from the French Government, aims to conserve 12% of the Amazon by 2025 and benefit more than 68,000 people across seven Amazonian countries.



Photo: Anecap



This initiative is part of a broader proposal: the Indigenous Amazonian REDD+ Ambition Strategy (RIA) based on an administrative contract approach. **This Indigenous-led strategy for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience is driven by the National Association of Contract Administrators of Communal Reserves of Peru (ANECAP)** and is being developed across the country's ten communal reserves.

The Eshpe cacao harvest is limited by a management plan that designates only 288 hectares for cultivation, acting as a safeguard against overexploitation and ensuring the long-term conservation of the forest and sustainability of the ancestral agroforestry system. The co-management model with SERNANP also helps guarantee that AMARCY producers fulfill their responsibility to protect the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY AND CHALLENGES

One of the obligations established by the 2006 administrative contract is that the ECA (AMARCY) must seek funding sources to support RCYAN's management. This obligation ensures the model's financial sustainability. Similarly, another obligation requires AMARCY to demand support from SERNANP, the National Police of Peru, the Public Ministry and National Prosecutor's Office, and the Joint Command of the Armed Forces to control and suppress illegal activities within RCYAN. This protection safeguards RCYAN from any destructive industries attempting to exploit its natural resources.

Additionally, AMARCY is responsible for developing income-generating projects to reinvest in the conservation of ecosystem services, which is carried out through the activities of Kowen Poetsath SAC. AMARCY has explicitly stated that the revenues from Kowen Poetsath SAC are also reinvested in optimising value chain processes and improving the incomes of Yanesha families. This is achieved by consolidating a mixed cacao value chain: native cacao for specialised markets, alongside organic and fair-trade certification for criollo and common cacao varieties.

PARTNERSHIPS

The AMARCY/SERNANP co-management model's main supporter has been Sustainable Rural Development (DRIS) through the technical support previously discussed in this case study. This technical support also helped AMARCY win the National Quality Cocoa Competition in 2019.

Other organisations who have offered their support include BOS+, the UN Development Programme and the Alianza de Cacao.



Lessons learned

and the role of subnational governments

The AMARCY co-management model demonstrates that Indigenous-led governance, when combined with technical support and clear institutional frameworks, can successfully balance biodiversity conservation with sustainable livelihoods. **Key lessons include the importance of participatory decision-making, transparent management and the integration of traditional knowledge with modern agroecological practices.** Economic incentives, such as sustainable cacao value chains, can align with conservation objectives as long as environmental safeguards are maintained.

The technical package developed by AMARCY for deforestation-free cacao production is already being replicated in other communal reserves, highlighting the need for knowledge transfer and adaptation to local contexts. Subnational governments can play a crucial role in scaling these successes. They can provide financial support, facilitate technical exchanges and help adapt best practices to new areas.

Their proximity to the territory and communities allows them to bridge national policies with local realities, coordinate resources and ensure Indigenous voices are represented in policymaking. **By supporting capacity building, financing and intersectoral coordination, subnational governments can help institutionalise and expand effective Indigenous conservation models, contributing to broader climate and biodiversity goals.**



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about this project, contact us by email at info@regions4.org to schedule an informational meeting, clarify your questions, and receive support for the implementation of similar projects.



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ABOUT REGIONS4

Regions4 (formerly known as nrg4SD) is a global network that exclusively represents regional governments (states, regions, and provinces) in UN processes, European Union initiatives, and global discussions on climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents more than 40 members from 20 countries across 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation, and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action.

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