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CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL

Peru



Tajimat Pujut, Peru

INNOVATIVE FINANCING CASE STUDIES

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Innovative Financing Case Studies

Each of the case studies in this series describes a conservation finance mechanism in action. Before diving into a case study, look for the **Key Readiness Factors** – these are conditions or resources you should ideally have in place to successfully implement that model – and the **Best Fit Contexts** suggesting where or when the model is most appropriate. Use these pointers to gauge if a mechanism aligns with your community's situation.

The intent of sharing these financing case studies is to offer an in-depth look into the essential but often unseen inner workings – the “engine room” – of community-led conservation finance mechanisms. While other resources typically highlight funding sources or the ultimate distribution of funds, this series illuminates the critical governance, administration, and management processes at the heart of conservation financing. The case studies demonstrate how robust internal structures can prevent conflict, streamline administration, and ultimately drive enduring environmental and community outcomes.



ALTO NARANJILLO, IMAGE CREDIT: POLLINATION FOUNDATION

Tajimat Pujut, Peru

(REDD+ AND LIVELIHOODS MODEL)
AWAJÚN, FERIAAM & CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL



LOCATION
Peru



Tajimat Pujut (trans. “good living”) is an Awajún-led REDD+ initiative in Peru’s Alto Mayo that leverages carbon credits and sustainable enterprises to conserve ~231,000 hectares of Amazon rainforest while improving Indigenous livelihoods and self-governance.

Key Readiness Factors:

- **Secure Land Tenure:** Clear tenure provided the confidence for communities to engage in Conservation Agreements, long-term carbon projects, and invest in their forests.
- **Strong Indigenous Governance:** Bottom-up governance makes conservation commitments realistic and enforceable through social cohesion. In the Alto Mayo, an organised Indigenous federation (FERIAAM) and the Life Plan process ensured the project fit local visions rather than an external agenda.
- **Technical Capacity:** The Awajún initiative required nearly a decade of preparation (2013–2021) before it could formally launch as a carbon project. Consistent technical support from CI providing expertise in carbon markets and sustainable enterprise development was a key enabling factor.
- **Initial Catalytic Funding:** Early-stage multi-year philanthropic funding from BHP Foundation helped to de-risk and incubate the project to a stage where it could become credit-generating.
- **Cultural Alignment:** Indigenous finance mechanisms must be rooted in Indigenous values and knowledge to truly succeed. Framing a funding mechanism in culturally relevant terms (like *tajimat pujut*), can help communities affirm their identity and rights while engaging with innovative finance.

Best Fit Contexts:

- **High Conservation Value & Threat Level:** Alto Mayo’s forests are of high ecological value and were under acute threat from external pressures. This created both urgency and opportunity. In areas with moderate threat, the carbon additionality might be lower; in areas with extreme threat but weak governance, the approach might not hold.
- **Regions with Recognized Indigenous Rights:** Contexts where national or regional legislation strongly supports Indigenous land and carbon rights, ensuring legal security for long-term conservation investments.
- **Market Opportunities:** Regions that offer viable opportunities for high-value sustainable agricultural and forestry products (e.g., specialty cacao, vanilla, medicinal plants) which align economic incentives with conservation objectives.

Mechanism Overview:

Tajimat Pujut is a combined REDD+ and ARR (Afforestation, Reforestation & Revegetation) project grounded in the Awajún concept of “buen vivir” (well-being). It uses Community Life Plans (CLPs) – community-developed vision documents – as the basis for binding Conservation Agreements. Each participating community commits to halt forest clearing in exchange for support in livelihoods and governance strengthening. Sixteen Awajún communities have voluntarily opted in to co-design and implement this project.

The initiative conserves standing forests (avoided deforestation) and restores degraded areas through reforestation, while diversifying income with sustainable products like cocoa, coffee, vanilla, timber (from plantations), handicrafts, medicinal plants and other nature-based enterprises. The Awajún Regional Federation (FERIAAM) is the proponent and Conservation International Peru is the co-proponent of this carbon project, ensuring the project is Indigenous-governed – FERIAAM represents the communities’ priorities, and all development and conservation efforts are guided by the CLPs agreed upon by each community. This governance structure empowers the Awajún to drive the project in line with their cultural values and autonomy.

How it works:

Tajimat Pujut employs a blended finance approach combining upfront grants, government incentives, and carbon market revenue. The initial phase (2013–2020) relied on grants from donors and NGOs to fund planning, capacity-building, and pilot projects. For instance, the BHP Foundation’s grant covered the development of life plans, governance training, and livelihood trials. Additional support came via Peru’s National Program for Forest Conservation, which provides performance-based payments to Indigenous communities that reduce deforestation. As the project moves forward, its primary long-term financing will be the sale of verified carbon credits on the voluntary market. Carbon buyers pay for the emissions reductions, and these proceeds are channelled to the Awajún communities through a structure designed to ensure Indigenous control.

Conservation International and FERIAAM have set up a multi-tiered financial mechanism: part of the carbon income will go into an Awajún-controlled trust fund dedicated to continued “green” economic development and core conservation activities. Another portion is distributed directly to communities (or their local associations) via self-managed community funds. Each community, in line with its Life Plan, decides how to invest these funds – for example, improving cocoa processing facilities, funding patrols and park guard salaries, supporting education or healthcare, or capitalizing new sustainable businesses. FERIAAM provides oversight to ensure transparency and that expenditures align with conservation commitments, while technical partners assist with financial administration as needed in the early years.

In addition to carbon and government forest incentives, the strategy includes leveraging some profit from community enterprises (e.g. a share of sales of vanilla or cacao is reinvested in conservation) and pursuing new grants or climate funds to match the community’s conservation outcomes. Overall, the benefit-sharing model is structured around the Conservation Agreements: communities fulfill their no-deforestation pledges and carry out restoration, and in return they receive financial support (training, materials, livelihood investments, and cash or in-kind benefits) as per agreed terms. This contract-like model has been key to building trust – communities see tangible benefits for conserving forests, and funds flow according to transparent, agreed rules. As Peru’s legal framework explicitly recognizes Indigenous carbon rights, the Awajún are rightful owners of the carbon credits and thus directly reap the economic rewards, with external actors (CI, donors) stepping back into advisory roles over time.

Timeline & Key Dates:

- **2013:** CI Peru begins working with Alto Mayo Awajun communities on Life Plans and collective conservation agreements.
- **2016:** Awajun communities joined the Amazon Indigenous REDD+ Program (RIA), a COICA/AIDSEP initiative, to build capacity for an Indigenous-led REDD+ project.
- **2019:** BHP Foundation partnership launched, bringing a multi-year grant that supported Awajun sustainable development planning, governance training, and livelihood pilots.
- **2021:** Formal design of the Tajimat Pujut REDD+ project was started. The project was officially launched with eight communities signing conservation agreements. The first community-driven products - an Awajun chocolate and "Nuwa" herbal tea - were developed to showcase forest-friendly livelihoods.
- **2023:** An Awajun Governance School graduated its first cohort of 54 young leaders to support the project's management.
- **2024:** All 16 Awajun communities (covering ~231k ha) gave their formal approval and signed on to Tajimat Pujut. A full Project Description (PD) for carbon certification was drafted. Tajimat Pujut was highlighted as a model Indigenous carbon project in international forums.
- **2025:** The project is undergoing validation under the Verified Carbon Standard and Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standard. First carbon credit issuance is anticipated, marking the transition to a sustained implementation phase with performance-based carbon revenue.



VANILLA RESTORATION, IMAGE CREDIT: POLLINATION FOUNDATION

Partners/Beneficiaries:

- **Awajún Communities & FERIAAM:** Sixteen Awajún communities (~7,000 people) in Alto Mayo hold collective title to ~231,000 ha of rainforest. They are the primary beneficiaries and implementers, committing to conserve their forests and restore degraded lands. Their federation, FERIAAM (Awajún Indigenous Federation of Alto Mayo), is the official project proponent representing community interests. FERIAAM coordinates project governance, ensuring community decisions (via assemblies and Life Plans) guide implementation.
- **Conservation International Peru (CI):** Co-proponent and strategic technical partner. CI facilitated the initial life planning process, and provides expertise in carbon accounting, monitoring, and sustainable business development. They also helped broker Conservation Agreements and training in governance and enterprise skills. CI continues to support project monitoring and marketing of carbon credits, while building Indigenous capacity to eventually fully manage the project.
- **Government (Public Sector):** The Regional Government of San Martín and Peru's national agencies (MINAM and SERNANP) back the initiative through policy support and programs. The Alto Mayo forests are in a biodiversity hotspot and the project aligns with regional conservation plans. Government programs like the National Forest Conservation Program provide incentive payments for avoided deforestation on community lands, complementing Tajimat Pujut. Authorities also assist in value-chain initiatives (e.g. a regional vanilla roundtable to promote sustainable vanilla involving CI, FERIAAM, and others).
- **Donors and Philanthropy:** BHP Foundation was a major early funder, investing in the project's development and foundational community work. Other income for capacity-building, feasibility studies, and seed funding of new enterprises comes from philanthropic funds and entities such as USAID and Canada Government. These funds enabled the Awajún to establish nurseries, the "Women's Forest" medicinal plant gardens, and other enterprises to supplement carbon revenues.
- **Private Sector & Markets:** Carbon credit buyers (companies seeking high-quality offsets) are key partners, as their purchases will generate revenue for the communities. Additionally, private partners assist with livelihood value chains: for example, the Takiwasi Laboratory and AVAIPE (Vanilla Association) have worked with Awajún producers to develop marketable herbal teas and vanilla products. Sustainable coffee and cacao buyers (including specialty coffee markets and chocolate companies) are involved through conservation.

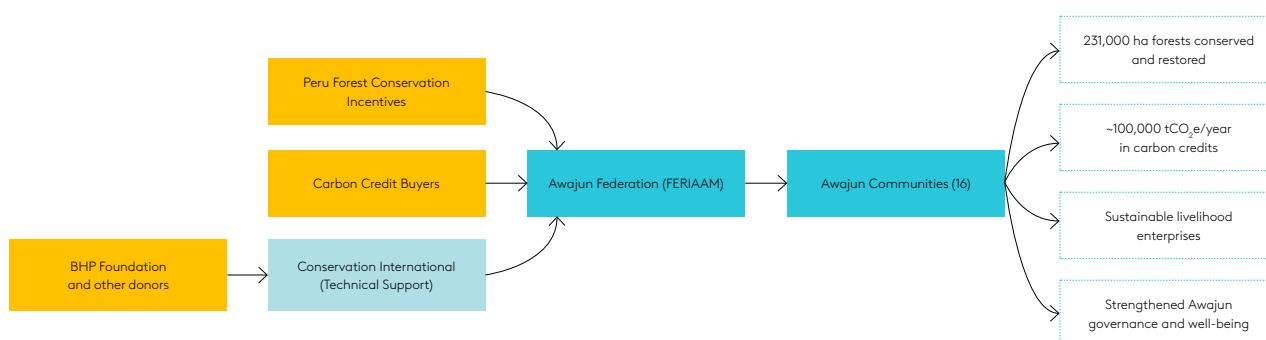


AWAJUN RAINFOREST CRAFTS. IMAGE CREDIT: POLLINATION FOUNDATION

Impacts/Outcomes:

- **Forest Conservation:** The project safeguards ~231,000 hectares of Amazonian forest across the Awajun communities' territory. These forests are extremely biodiverse and provide essential ecosystem services. Deforestation rates on participating lands are dropping as communities halt slash-and-burn agriculture and land leasing for monocultures.
- **Carbon Emissions Reductions:** Emission reductions are projected at ~100,000 tCO₂e per year on average, through avoided deforestation and forest regeneration. These high-integrity carbon credits will generate performance-based income for the communities while contributing to Peru's climate mitigation goals.
- **Ecosystem Restoration:** A significant ARR component involves reforesting degraded lands with native species. For example, the Shampuyacu community had lost ~4,366 ha (89% of its titled land) to deforestation from past land rentals; under Tajimat Pujut they are now replanting these areas with timber and fruit trees and restoring swidden fallows. Such forest restoration improves water security (protecting watersheds), revives soil fertility, and creates wildlife habitat connectivity with the Alto Mayo Protected Forest. In addition, tree plantations (for sustainable wood and fruit) are planned as future income sources, reducing pressure on natural forests.
- **Sustainable Livelihoods:** All 16 communities are transitioning towards deforestation-free livelihoods. They receive training, seedlings, and market access support to produce high-value crops under agroforestry systems. This includes shade-grown coffee and cacao (now sold as "conservation cocoa/coffee" with premium pricing), vanilla cultivation in forest understory, medicinal and aromatic plant harvesting for teas, and eco-tourism initiatives. Notably, two flagship products have emerged: an Awajun artisan chocolate (made with their forest-friendly cacao) and "Nuwa's tea" - herbal infusions developed by Awajun women - which celebrate the link between Indigenous culture and forest conservation. These enterprises generate income for families, reducing reliance on destructive activities.
- **Strengthened Governance & Capacity:** The process of developing CLPs and enforcing conservation agreements has enhanced community organization and financial management skills. The Awajun School of Governance has prepared a new generation of youth and women to take on leadership roles in community assemblies and project oversight.
- **Cultural Revitalization:** Tajimat Pujut embeds cultural values into the project's framework. Traditional knowledge (e.g. use of medicinal plants, sustainable agroforestry practices) is being reaffirmed and passed to the next generation through project activities.

Money Flow Diagram:



Community Readiness Questions:

- Does our community have formally established collective land tenure and carbon rights recognized under national law?
- Are our governance structures fully operational and representative of all participating communities?
- Do we have (or are we able to create) something like a Community Life Plan clearly articulating our conservation commitments and development priorities?
- Is there existing community capacity for managing conservation agreements, sustainable enterprises, and carbon market participation?
- Have communities demonstrated readiness to transition from grant-based support to revenue streams from carbon credits and sustainable products?

Key Risks to Consider:

- **Carbon Market Volatility:** Dependence on carbon credit revenues exposes communities to fluctuations in global carbon market prices, potentially impacting long-term funding stability.
- **Community Governance:** Any weakening or division in local governance structures may compromise implementation and adherence to conservation agreements.
- **External Pressures:** Continued threats from pressures like illegal logging, agricultural expansion, or infrastructure projects could undermine conservation goals.
- **Capacity Gaps:** Insufficient local technical or financial management capacity could affect the timely delivery of conservation outcomes and financial accountability.



INDIGENOUS WOMEN CONSERVING THE NUWAS FOREST, IMAGE CREDIT: CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL PERU



Trust Fund Checklist

- **Define purpose and scope:** Clearly outline the community's long-term conservation and development objectives, specifying the territory covered, costs associated with conservation, restoration activities, and community livelihood support. Establish clarity around how these efforts align with community Life Plans and governance goals.
- **Establish governance structures:** Formally set up clear Indigenous-led governance structures to manage the initiative and related finances. Draft governance agreements specifying community decision-making processes, rules for managing carbon revenue, and protocols ensuring Indigenous control, transparency, and accountability.
- **Secure initial funding and carbon project approval:** Obtain early catalytic funding from philanthropic sources and complete rigorous carbon project validation processes to position the initiative for long-term financial sustainability through carbon credit sales. Ensure initial funding supports governance training, community capacity building, and pilot enterprise development.
- **Develop community capacity and enterprises:** Provide targeted training and resources to build Indigenous capacity in sustainable livelihood activities (e.g., cacao, coffee, vanilla, medicinal plants), carbon project management, and financial oversight. Implement conservation agreements clearly linking community benefits to forest protection commitments.
- **Monitor, report, and adapt:** Establish robust monitoring systems to track ecological impacts (e.g. forest cover, carbon sequestration), economic benefits (e.g. community income, enterprise viability), and social outcomes (e.g. community governance, cultural revitalisation).

Further reading

- Further information about the Tajimat Pujut project can be found by contacting [Conservation International Peru](#).
- Additional innovative financing resources and case studies can be accessed through [Pollination Foundation](#).
- Ampliseed/Pollination Foundation (2022). [Conservation Financing Strategies: Key Lessons and Case Studies](#).
- ALCA (2025) [Conservation Finance Handbook](#).
- EcoAdvisors/TNC (2020). [Conservation financing for conservation programs with Indigenous People and Local Communities](#).
- BHP Foundation (2023). [I've Learned That I Can Be A Leader](#).
- BHP Foundation (2022). [Restoring a Vital Link Between People and Nature](#).



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