

## Community Action for the Re-introduction and Sustainable Management of Endemic Fish Species

**SGP Grantee:** Comité de Criadores de Peces de la Laguna de Pomacanchi (Fish Farmers Committee of Lake Pomacanchi), in collaboration with the Grupo de Tecnología y Desarrollo (Technology and Development Group)

**Location:** Acomayo Province, southern Peru

**Ecosystem Type:** freshwater lake

**Biodiversity Significance:** endemic species

**Key Themes:** species re-introduction, sustainable fisheries management

**SGP Contribution:** \$35,265 (June 2000)

### Background

Lake Pomacanchi, located in southern Peru, is home to 17 communities, including 1,100 families, who depend heavily upon the lake for their survival. However, due to heavy fishing, the survival of some fish species is threatened. This includes the *suche* (*trichomycterus rivulatus*), which is endemic to this and several other lakes in this region. In order to balance the needs of people with the survival of this and other endemic species, better knowledge and techniques were needed.

While the Fishers' Association of Lake Pomacanchi involves 280 families, a smaller group of ten families make up the Fish Farmers Committee, raising trout in tanks and underwater cages. This group, in conjunction with the Technology and Development Group, received funding from the GEF Small Grants Programme to re-introduce the *suche* and ensure that its population remains at sustainable levels. At the same time, the local population could regain access to this fish – known for its good taste – as a source of nutrition and income generation.

### Project Implementation

The Technology and Development Group and the Fish Farmers Committee began by conducting applied research on the growth patterns, behavior, and habitat needs of the *suche*. Committee members received training and support to grow the *suche* in tanks, and when they were sufficiently grown, to release them into the lake. The Committee gained formal recognition as an organization through the Regional Fisheries Bureau, and as a result gained a concession to stock Lake Yanacocha, which is part of the same watershed. After this success, the Committee has been growing additional fish for reintroduction into other lakes where it used to thrive. One is Lake Titicaca, the largest freshwater lake in South America, which is also designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

### Results

Through this project, the Committee has raised 20,000 *suche* fish, and has introduced 15,000 juveniles into Lake Pomacanchi. Locally, The Committee is making use of its new-found capacity and knowledge to start small ecotourism efforts, educating visitors about the fish and even offering the fish as food once the population is of sufficient size and sustainably managed. Through this experience, the Committee gained valuable knowledge about the needs of this little-studied fish, and this knowledge can now benefit other lakes and communities where the *suche* can be re-introduced. The community members and local authorities surrounding Lake Pomacanchi have greatly increased awareness about this endemic species and the local efforts to re-introduce it. This will be essential for the success of efforts to sustainably manage the fish of this lake.

### Partnerships

This project was the result of a partnership between a local community association and an NGO providing technical assistance. Close collaboration with local authorities was also critical, since their approval was necessary to carry out many aspects of the project. In addition, project leaders also helped build the capacity of local authorities in sustainable fisheries management.

