

# Caribbean

## fisherfolk in

# EAF

*Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries*

## Paula Jacobs Williams

*A woman advocating for sustainable fisheries and alternative livelihoods that support women in the fisheries sector*

Paula Jacobs Williams is a sustainable fisheries advocate, fisherwoman, village council chairperson and restaurateur from Punta Negra - a small fishing village in southern Belize. Her efforts to promote sustainable fisheries in Belize include educating fisherfolk in her village and working with co-managers of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve marine protected area. Port Honduras Marine Reserve is important to Punta Negra because the community lies directly on its boundary.



*Paula has long envisioned having a restaurant in her community that not only offers women an alternative livelihood to fishing, but also favours sustainable practices that support a healthy ecosystem and her community's development.*



Punta Negra Village, located in Southern Belize (Credit: Punta Negra Village, Toledo District Belize Facebook Page)

Punta Negra is a tiny, remote coastal community set on miles of pristine, beautiful natural beach. The community is only accessible by boat. Residents' main sources of income are from fishing and small-scale tourism services. As a coastal community, Punta Negra is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels, more frequent and intense storms, coastal erosion, and warmer sea temperatures. These impacts have direct effects on the health and productivity of the marine ecosystems that support the livelihoods of the people living there.



Top left: View of Punta Negra beachfront (Credit: Punta Negra Village, Toledo District, Belize Facebook Page). Bottom left: Women of the Punta Negra Grill & Tavern Restaurant preparing a meal for customers (Credit: Paula Jacobs Williams). Right: Paula Jacobs Williams fishing (Credit: Paula Jacobs Williams)

## An alternative livelihood for Punta Negra women

Paula, as the leading member of the Seabreeze Women's Group, helped to establish a cultural restaurant that provides an **alternative livelihood to the women of Punta Negra**. Working with the co-managers of the nearby Port Honduras Marine Reserve, the Toledo Institute for Development and Environment (TIDE) and with support from the Mesoamerican Reef (MAR) Fund, the women's group constructed and now manage the 'Punta Negra Grill and Tavern' restaurant which serves traditional Belizean cuisine.

*Punta Negra Grill & Tavern is a cabin-style restaurant located only a few meters from the seashore. Here, visitors can sit back, relax and enjoy traditional Belizean cuisine while soaking in the beautiful Belizean scenery featuring mesmerizing ocean views and enchanting sunsets.*



Patio view at the Punta Negra Grill & Tavern Restaurant (Credit: Paula Jacobs Williams)

The restaurant, which opened in 2015, is managed by four women and functions in a sustainable manner that promotes wise use of fisheries resources. For example, the women practice **sustainable fishing** by catching only what is needed daily. This practice **minimises waste** and ensures that the restaurant's customers are provided with fresh, quality seafood dishes. Additionally, if there is a surplus in the kitchen, the women share it with the community. Visitors are also encouraged to book in advance or cancel on time – so that prepared food would not be wasted, and a day's profit lost. When they are not able to go fishing themselves, the women restaurateurs ask community fishers to sell them lobster and fish, thereby **contributing to the local economy** and ensuring that benefits spread to the wider community. In the years since its establishment, these innovative women have also expanded the restaurant's services to offer visitors classes on how to make coconut oil, fudge and traditional creole food. This innovation has allowed for **additional sources of income** as they promote the restaurant, not only as a dining experience, but a more versatile, eco-conscious tourism experience - encouraging further avenues for tourism possibilities in Punta Negra Village.

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Top left: Fish harvested by Paula (Credit: Paula Jacobs-Williams). Bottom left: Punta Negra Tavern & Grill Restaurant. Right: A meal with a view, at the Punta Negra Grill & Tavern Restaurant. Credit: Punta Negra Village, Toledo District Belize Facebook Page)

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