

# 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 has involved educating fisherfolk in her village; as well as working with co-managers of the Port Honduras Marine Reserve: a marine protected area that is important to Punta Negra as the community lies directly on its boundary.



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- that is only accessible by boat. Residents' main sources of income and livelihoods include 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 which have direct effects on the health and productivity of the marine ecosystems that support the livelihoods of the people living there.



*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.*



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



## An alternative livelihood for Punta Negra women

Paula, as the leading member of a women's group called 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 creole 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 beyond them and into the wider community. In its years since 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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- Sustainable Resource Management
- Social Development, Employment, Decent Work
- Value Chains, Post-harvest and Trade
- Gender Equality

#### CLME+ Civil Society Strategic Action Programme

- Develop and enhance livelihoods based on sustainable use of coastal and marine resources



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

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