

Nalia Fedrix gave up her job as a professional nurse to return to her fishing village in Nicaragua to do what she most enjoyed—fishing.

A professional nurse and fisherwoman? An unusual combination, certainly, but one that aptly describes 53-year-old Nalia Fedrix, who gave up her job as professional nurse to return to her fishing village to do the work that gave her most joy—fishing. “I inherited the art of fishing from my parents,” says Nalia. “It seems to me that ever since I was born, I have fished; ever since I could think, I have fished!”

PROFILE

Nalia Fedrix: Proud to be Born on the Coast

Nalia Fedrix gave up her job as a professional nurse to go fishing

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Born in a fishing village in Puerto Cabezas de la Raan in Nicaragua, Nalia started fishing as a toddler. “We used to go to the beach to play and that’s when my dad started teaching us how to fish.” “*Jalar chinchorro*,” he would say, “Pull the lines!” Going fishing with friends at age 14, Nalia recalls a sea full of fish: “At that time, we used to give away everything we fished. We went fishing for fun. Those days, fish was very cheap but later, of course, the prices started shooting up. The *robalo* (common snook) in those days cost only 5 cents (US\$0.0021), but now it costs 14 *córdobas* (US\$0.6).

Nalia did not pursue fishing as a means of livelihood. Instead, she trained as a professional nurse and left her fishing village to go to town to work. Throughout her stay in the city, Nalia missed the sea. The waves of the sea tugged at her heart, calling her back. “I always thought of returning to my place of origin to work as a fisherwoman,” recalls Nalia. And so, quitting city life, she returned.

Never looking back, Nalia is proud that she went on to raise a family, supported by fishing alone, and that her children too have centered their lives around fishing. “For me, the sea and fishing mean a lot—I am proud I was born on the coast,” she says, “Fishing has supported my family and though I am a single mother, it has helped provide my children with an education. Fishing is a good occupation. It teaches you to make good use of the time and resources you spend on it; it teaches you not to waste.”

Nalia’s life as a fisher has not been without its challenges. She recalls a chilling moment when she was out at sea fishing with a friend. “Suddenly, a shark, about 10 or 15 ft long, passed by us,” she remembers, “And do you know, my *panga* (boat) happens to be named ‘Shark!’” My friend said to me: “Why have you given such a name to your boat?” “At that exact moment, the boat turned over. It was terrifying. We spent three hours at sea before we were able to swim back to the coast.”

The people in Nalia’s village were sure that after this experience, she would never venture out to sea again. “But,” says Nalia, “If I don’t go to the sea, I get sick. I’m sure that it was God who protected us that day from that shark!”