



Since she was seven, Anna Ramirez, now 63, has been fishing with her family off the coast of Belize's southernmost district—Toledo. Never has being a woman stopped her from working just as hard as the men do while at sea.

Her most challenging moments have involved braving the rough seas, even under the threat of hurricanes. "It's not easy. You have to be brave and willing to take chances—big chances too!" she says.

## PROFILE

### Fisher of the Year—Anna Ramirez

#### A role model for future generations of fishers

This is an abridged version of an article featured in the following website:  
[http://www.crfm.net/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=447:anna-ramirez-fisher-lady-of-punta-gorda-recognized-as-fisher-of-the-year&Itemid=179](http://www.crfm.net/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=447:anna-ramirez-fisher-lady-of-punta-gorda-recognized-as-fisher-of-the-year&Itemid=179)

As a young girl, Anna Ramirez, like her brothers, took up fishing for a living. The area where they traditionally fished was declared the Port Honduras Marine Reserve Area in 2000, and today, the introduction of a managed access programme there by the Belize Fisheries Department has helped to reduce illegal fishing in the area, thus improving their fish catch. Notably, Anna Ramirez was instrumental in the establishment of the reserve.

Anna and her husband, also a fisher, have taught their nine children to fish. In fact, she

says that her biggest reward is having been able to teach her children what she knows. Although Anna herself no longer fishes, her children do, and she markets their produce at the Punta Gorda Town market in Toledo thrice a week. Fishing, says Anna, made her an independent woman, and she never fails to urge young people to learn the trade so that they too can become independent.

Recently, Anna was chosen for special recognition as the winner of the 'Punta Fuego Outstanding Fisher of the Year' award for her commitment and dedication to hard work, and for consistently encouraging young people to take up fishing in sustainable ways. The award was presented on the occasion of the first ever Fisherman's Day festivities in Belize on Monday, 29 June 2015.

Speaking on the occasion, Marla Ramirez of the Fisheries Department, described Anna as, "not only a responsible fisher and advocate but a Belizean sustainable fisher ... She has always taught her children to take out what is necessary and put back what is small."

While Anna Ramirez is hopeful about the prospect of her grandchildren being able to earn a decent living from fishing, she feels illegal fishing is currently the greatest threat to the sector and must be decisively tackled by the government. ❏