

PROFILE

Sonia Medina Matarrita: Fisherwoman from Isla Venado, Costa Rica

Single but not alone

By **Vivienne Solis Rivera** (vsolis@coopesolidar.org),
Member ICSE,
Costa Rica



Sonia Medina Matarrita

Born in Venado Island, in the Nicoya gulf of Costa Rica's Puntarenas province, 44-year-old Sonia Medina Matarrita is part of the fourth generation of a small-scale artisanal fishing family. A single mother, Sonia has taken care of her family of two girls and one boy single-handedly for the past 13 years. The path has not been easy but all the years of struggle and hard work have paid off, and despite the odds, today Sonia has many achievements to her credit.

Sonia is the President of the fisher's association of Venado Island, a post she has held for three consecutive years. Under her leadership, the association, which has 64 fishers as members, has been able to coordinate with academic institutions, such as the National University of Costa Rica; with state institutions, such as INCOPECA (Instituto Costarricense de Pesca y Acuicultura or the Costa Rican Institute for Fisheries and Aquaculture), IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social or the Mixed Institute for Social Help) and the Labour Ministry; and

also, to engage in production activities, such as the aquaculture farming of oysters and red snappers. The association is fully involved in the implementation of responsible fishing in the Marine Responsible Fishing Area of Venado Island. As president, Sonia participates with active interest in the activities of the Marine Responsible Fishing Area Network, of which she is also a coordinator, being ably assisted and supported with technical advice by CoopeSoliDar R.L. and INCOPECA. An important objective of the Network is the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines).

Not only this, Sonia was also part of the effort that made possible the meeting and networking of women from the seas, the rivers, lagoons and mangroves in Costa Rica, which led to the formulation of a common agenda that had, as its main objective, the strengthening of fisherwomen's capacities.

Today, Sonia is also a part of the Director Board of the INCOPECA. In this capacity, she will be representing Costa Rica's small-scale fishing sector for the next four years, furthering the interests of this sector and of her association, as also, strengthening the board's capacity to engage in meaningful action. ■