

President, Saganang Buhay Nagkakaisa Organization  
Barangay Councilor, Brgy. Buayan, General Santos City

## MS. JACQUELINE S. DEGAYO

A Grassroots Trailblazer

***“I have been through a lot of challenges as a leader, like being questioned of my ability because I am a woman. I prove everyone wrong because I deliver outputs that make life better. I know that women work with dedication because women work with love.”***



**WOMEN LEAD AND  
WORK WITH LOVE AND  
COMPASSION**

The seven years that Ms. Jacqueline Degayo served as Purok Chairperson edged her way into now becoming a Barangay Councilor (Kagawad). She makes the most of the authority granted to her position in order to introduce changes and initiate strict compliance to all the rules in order to have a more efficient system in their barangay.

Before she entered the realm of politics, she was a fish vendor. She would peddle the fish caught by her husband. If the harvest was less than ten kilos, she would sell them around their barangay. If it was one of the better days, she would go to the market and sell the fish at her in-law's stall. This earned her a little extra income to defray their family's expenses.

Being a former fish vendor, advocating for women in fisheries has always been close to her heart. Now that she is capable of creating change, she makes sure that the plight of fishers in their community could be improved. Ms. Degayo is also a Bantay Dagat volunteer and is very vigilant together with other women in reporting all forms of abuse of natural resources and illegal fishing practices.

She was President of *Saganang Buhay na Nagkakaisa*, a women's group that is registered under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and is presently composed of 25 to 40 members. Their group received a 10,000-peso grant from DOLE and this helped them create livelihoods for their members' families. They actively come up with projects that are considered as long-term income generators for women. These include fish drying, crafting of souvenir items, and rehabilitation of mangroves.



The efforts of Ms. Degayo and the rest of the group were identified by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) as an outstanding initiative to help women in the community.

Ms. Degayo ensures that women are knowledgeable so that they do not end up as blind followers. She encourages them to remain informed of the government services available to them and make the most out of such services. She shares that women will come up with various ways to generate resources for their livelihood once they are equipped with proper knowledge. This also becomes a stepping stone for them to value their contribution to society and to fight for their rights.

Being a Barangay Kagawad puts her in a position to influence her constituents' behavior with new policies particularly in fisheries management. She always reaches out to her community by thoroughly explaining to them new policies or programs before they are implemented. She endeavors to continue her works in counseling and training women on coastal law enforcement, gender sensitivity, anti-violence against women campaigns, and establishing community livelihood programs.

Ms. Degayo is sure that she makes the most out of her days in office because the people embrace her with the trust that she is there to help them empower themselves. She believes that only empowered citizens can bring the most out of a functional community. *"Ang lakas ng kababaihan ay dapat na maipakita. Sa ano mang trabaho, lahat ay pantay-pantay sapagkat ito ay ating karapatan."*

Ms. Degayo does not only ensure a strong community for women fishers. She is building the community closer through mutual respect from the people; regardless of gender, status, and upbringing.



Ms. Jacqueline Degayo and members of Saganang Buhay Nagkakaisa Organization in Brgy Buayan, General Santos City.



Ms. Jacqueline Degayo participated in mangrove planting and rehabilitation initiatives implemented by DENR.