

# Four Women and the Role of “Kulapu” in their Lives—Part 4

*This is the fourth part of the article entitled "Women in Kulapu." The first part was published in Volume 2 Issue 3 which identified the first of the 4 women. In this issue the author shares with us the story of Ms. Carmelita Cagute, the fourth woman.*

## Mrs. Carmelita Cagute, The Loyal Partner

Mrs. Carmelita Cagute, 59 years old, married with seven (7) children, resides in Barangay Aguadahan, San Jose. She is representing the marginalized fisherfolk. Her main source of living is fishing. She joins her husband to help him in fishing even in casting the nets. They had been fishing together for more than 30 years. This is an example of partnership for life. Their children were the ones selling their catch in the neighborhood. When asked if she was gathering “kulapu,” she admits that their family was engaged in “kulapu” gathering. It was a common sight in San Jose before that the parents usually bring their children in the collection of “kulapu.” As far as Ma’am Carmelita remembered, they started gathering and selling this brown seaweed in 2013. However, it did not last for even a year because the LGUs stopped them from gathering. They gathered “kulapu” for only eight months, and the peak months were observed from October to December. She said that they gathered “kulapu” after they catch fish and if there was still space in the motorboat. During bad weather, either they gather and sell “kulapu” or rely on gleaning during low tide. She cannot estimate the volume of “kulapu” they had gathered, but one banca filled is around 20-25 kg fresh weight. They dry the “kulapu” either by hanging in the house fence or dry it along the road. It usually takes 2-3 days to sundry “kulapu”. They have to spread it one by one and distribute evenly.



They make sure that they meet the required quality of “kulapu” by washing it first with seawater and then dried adequately for the right price. They sold the dried “kulapu” to a certain Ms. Margie Lucino (consolidator) who in turn sold to Ma’am Vivian (the trader) at P5-7.00/kg dry weight. Ma’am Carmelita said that the price is quite low but enough to buy few kilogram of rice.

With the enforcement of FAO 250, Ma’am Carmelita said that they have to follow the rules because it is for their good and for the conservation of the coastal resources. She added that it would be helpful if gathering will be regulated with the help of their barangay captain. This will also help control the intrusion of gatherers from other coastal barangays. Ma’am Carmelita added that she would only request from the government provision of motorboat and other farm implements to help them improve their fishing. But for now, she is happy and contented to be her husband’s loyal partner in fishing and keeping their family for 36 long years and counting, with or without “kulapu” in their lives. (MSFerrer)

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