

The 4th FAD Watch recovery mission targets the Inner Islands area

The Coast Guard vessel Topaz embarked on the 4th FAD (Fish Aggregating Devices) Watch recovery mission. The Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Fishing Authority, Dr. Jan Robinson was present at the Seychelles Coast Guard Base, to see off the crew who will be engaging in the 3-day mission. Building upon the success of previous FAD Watch missions, the Seychelles Fishing Authority and the Seychelles Maritime Academy will once again be participating in this endeavor.

Unlike previous missions where the area of focus was mainly Outer Islands, this 4th recovery mission will be targeting the Inner Islands area, namely Silhouette Island. Scientific publications on drifting Fish Aggregating Devices movements in the Seychelles waters have shown DFADs moving across the Mahe Plateau in the inner islands groups with Silhouette being a monitored zone in the FAD Watch project. Whilst not all those DFADs end up stranded, this latest mission intends to intercept them before they end up on our coral reefs and beaches.

The Seychelles Fishing Authority will also be field testing the new FAD data acquisition application (Shore-Manager/FAD-Watch) on portable GPS, in preparation for a longer mission scheduled for the middle of the year. The Shore Manager/FAD-Watch application will allow the user to have near real-time data on DFAD locations and to be alerted of possible stranding events which will facilitate the recovery of DFADs.

On the last expedition held from 13th November until 11th December 2023, the crew aboard the 'Saya de Malha' removed seven intact FADs and five others that were seriously damaged, as well as retrieved eight satellite buoys and various FAD debris from several atoll locations. The crew also cleared 6.1 tonnes of waste from the Aldabra Atoll.

"The Ministry of Fisheries and the Seychelles Fishing Authority are resolute in our efforts to protect the ocean and implement intelligent strategies in our FAD recovery efforts. The involvement of students from the Seychelles Maritime Academy is crucial, as we aim to share knowledge and empower the next generation. This partnership with the academy will continue for other future recovery missions. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to all local stakeholders, including the Island Conservation Society and the Island Development Company. Together, let us persevere in our collaborative efforts to safeguard the ocean for the well-being of future generations," stated Designated Minister Jean Francois Ferrari.

This 4th mission is being funded under the Seychelles-European Union Sustainable Partnership Agreement – funds dedicated for environmental management. Note that the mission is also made possible through the involvement of additional local stakeholders, including the Island Conservation Society (ICS) and the Island Development Company (IDC).

The Topaz vessel left for the mission on Monday 25th March, with a crew of 20 Coast Guard officers, along with 2 SFA Observers, 3 SMA students and 1 lecturer. The trip will be for 3 days. During the 3 days at sea, the crew will recover and collect FADs and bring them back to a designated storage facility on Mahe for sorting and further data analysis. The team is expected to return on Thursday 28th March 2024.



Group photo of the participants



Mr Stephan Monthy, SFA Observer



Coast Guard vessel 'Topaz'

