SEYCHELLES FISHERIES AUTHORITY

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PRESS RELEASE

1st Saya de Malha FAD Recovery Mission Under the SFA – SIOTI FAD Watch MOU a success

On the 16th December 2024, the Seychelles Coast Guard vessel Saya de Malha returned to port after 21 days at sea undertaking a Fish Aggregation Device (FAD) recovery mission. Onboard were SCG officers, 4 students and a lecturer from the Seychelles Maritime Academy, as well as a Scientific Observer and a Senior Fisheries Scientist from the Seychelles Fisheries Authority who over the voyage intercepted and recovered FADs at drift that posed a risk of stranding in the shallow marine habitats.

The main aim of this mission was to collect any FAD-related material which may have found its way onto any of the targeted islands as well as to test newly acquired FAD tracking software. The vessel visited 14 islands including most of the Amirantes islands and Aldabra.

During the course of the mission, assistance was provided on various islands by Seychelles Island Foundation, ICS and Save our Seas (SOS).

The trip, which had to be shortened due to cyclonic weather in the area, has been considered a success with 108 instances of FAD material being recovered. This represents the best result of all of the recovery missions so far. In fact, more FADs were collected than both of the previous missions combined. The success of the mission can be partly attributed to new FAD tracking software being trialled onboard the SCGV Saya de Malha. The collected FAD material was returned to Mahe for storage and recycling.

This is the 3rd FAD Recovery Mission undertaken since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Seychelles Fisheries Authority (SFA), the Sustainable Indian Ocean Tuna Initiative (SIOTI) and the Spanish Association of Tuna Freezers (AGAC) in July 2023. It is the 1st mission undertaken by the Coast Guard vessel Saya de Malha.

The tuna purse seine fishery operating in Seychelles waters incorporates the use of Fish Aggregation Devices (FADs) as an element of the fishing method. The FADs are free floating structures that are tracked electronically. Some FADs may be washed ashore during their passage in the EEZ which has raised concerns with some environmental monitoring organisations both local and international which has prompted the evolution of the project.

The FADWatch initiative partly aims to help Seychelles put into place a comprehensive monitoring and management program for FADs deployed by the industrial fishery in our waters. Continued engagement with local island environmental groups and NGOs will be pursued as similar missions are planned for 2025.

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