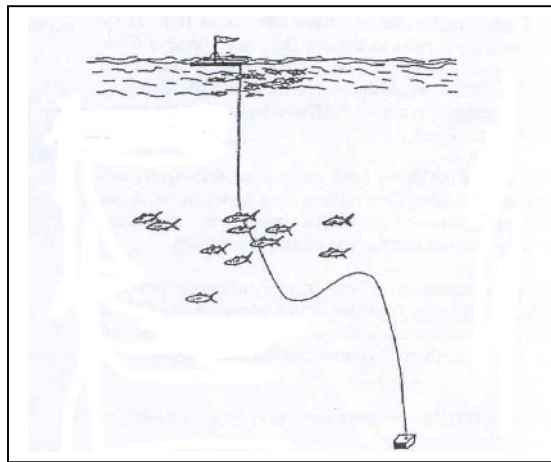


The Benefits of Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs)

Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs) are structures used to attract marine fish to an area. FADs are deployed at sea to facilitate the congregation of migratory fish. A FAD generally consists of a floating apparatus, to which a pole having attached a: (1) photosensitive light; (2) flag; and (3) radar reflector. These make the FAD visible during the day and night to sea faring vessels and this allows for easy identification.

A FAD is anchored in place through the use of hundreds of meters of rope, chain and cable connected to truck tires or drums filled with concrete. Approximately 60 feet below the sea surface, kites, coconut branches or artificial seaweed is attached to the rope. This material attracts smaller fish looking for shelter, which in turn attract larger fish such as tunas and dolphin fish looking for food. In turn, fishers are able to more easily target these larger fish congregated in one area.



Benefits of FADs include:

- Increased fish catch during the “low” fishing season, resulting in increased revenue;
- Better collaboration among fishers, fisher organizations and the Department of Fisheries (DOF);
- Enhanced co-operation among fishers;
- Reduced fuel and operating costs, as fishers can remain closer to conduct fishing activities;
- Reduced levels of conflict with other resource users in near shore areas; and
- Lower dependency on near shore resources.

Over the last decade, the DOF, in collaboration with fishing communities have deployed several FADs in waters adjacent to fishing communities.

In addition, the DOF staff conducted a number of awareness and sensitization programmes within the major fishing communities to sensitize fishers as to the benefits of the FADs, and highlight certain practices that they should not engage in while fishing near the FAD. For example, fishers should not tie their boats to the FAD in order to fish, as the added weight may cause the anchor line to break and lead to the loss of the FAD.

Recently, the Department of Fisheries has embarked on an initiative to deploy a FAD offshore every fishing community on the island. To date, four FADs have been deployed that will benefit the fishers of Anse La Raye, Canaries, Dennery, Micoud, Soufriere, and Vieux Fort. Fishers from Gros Islet and Castries will benefit from the next phase of the FAD program.



Maintenance of a FAD by DOF divers

Maintenance and monitoring of FADs is currently being undertaken by the DOF. However, the plan is for fishers to be taught to perform this role. Fishers in fishing communities are now assisting fisheries extension officers in FAD construction. The DOF is also investigating ways of reducing the cost of FADs by using materials that are readily available, like empty plastic bottles [floatation] and old nets found by deep-sea fishers. The DOF and fishers agree that the FAD programme has achieved favourable results and therefore, the two will continue collaborating activities under this and other programmes.

[2003]