

PhD position: Combined use of fisheries dependent and independent survey data for monitoring data-poor fish stocks

About the position

The National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), Sri Lanka, has a vacancy for a 3-year PhD position. The position is placed under the bilateral project “Improved management of the marine resources in Sri Lanka, Phase III 2025-2028”, a collaborative research project between the Institute of Marine Research (IMR), Norway and NARA, Sri Lanka. The candidate will be registered as a PhD candidate at the University of Bergen (UiB), Norway and will be partially funded by the bilateral project.

The main objective of the bilateral project is to aim for establishing management practices for sustainable fisheries in Sri Lankan waters. The successful candidate will use an interdisciplinary approach including acoustics and biological data recorded during fisheries independent surveys (collected during local and R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen cruises) and biological samples of the commercial catches to build time series and conduct data analyses. Further, the candidate will work with Norwegian sandeel acoustic data obtained with research vessels in combination with fisheries catch data. The parallel research in Sri Lankan and Norwegian waters will enable the applicant to broaden the scope necessary for sustainable fishery management. In the absence of trawl data from the fisheries independent surveys, the applicant will primarily use acoustics and commercial catch data to conduct survey time series analysis for management advice. The candidate chosen for the PhD position should have background knowledge in statistical survey and sampling planning, fisheries acoustic, and data analysis, including abundance estimation. Further, experience in participation in surveys will be an added qualification required for this position.

The successful candidate will mainly be attached to the Marine Biological Resources Division, NARA, with regular collaboration with the Pelagic Fish research group at the Institute of Marine Research, Norway. The nominee will be supervised by up to 3 highly qualified experts in the research field from IMR and UiB, Norway. The applicant is required to start no later than August 2025, and the position is contingent on successful enrolment in the PhD-program of the University of Bergen within 2 months of this starting date. The presence of the candidate in Bergen, Norway, for compulsory course work at the University of Bergen is required.

Required qualifications

- A Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree with Second-Class Honours in Biology, Fisheries & Marine Sciences or in related fields
- A completed Master's degree (MSc) in the field of Biology, Fisheries, Marine Sciences or in related fields, including coursework and a thesis, or an equivalent educational background

- Applicants with upper secondary education from a recognized university in the Nordic countries, EU / EEA or Switzerland are exempt
- of documenting English proficiency. English proficiency requirements could also be documented via English Language standardized tests e.g. TOEFL, IELTS

Desired skills

- Experience in fish biology and ecology
- Experience in acoustic monitoring of fish
- Skills in statistical analyses e.g. basic programming R skills or similar programs
- Strong practical, analytical and writing skills (in English)
- Ambition to publish high-quality articles in peer-reviewed journals
- Ability to work independently and effectively as a member of an interdisciplinary scientific team
- Goal-oriented and pro-active on progress reporting

We offer:

- A challenging, creative, and international working environment within one of Europe's leading marine research institutions
- An exciting project in a strong scientific environment
- Fully covered travels to Norway (up to 2 trips), in total up to 7 months per year; length of stay in each of the two periods is flexible; the stay period in Norway may be shortened depending on the study plan/field work
- Monthly allowance of ca. 735,000 LKR will be paid for accommodation and living expenses during the stay in Norway
- Project will assist in finding accommodation in Norway during the period of the candidate's stay

PhD training component

The selected PhD candidate has to fulfill 30 credits within the 3-year period at the UiB, Norway. These credits consist of the following elements:

- Courses, research courses, specialized programs: 20-22 credits
- Theory of science and ethics: 5 credits (mandatory)
- Dissemination including presentation at an international conference: 3-5 credits

For additional general information see the below given link:

<https://www.uib.no/en/nt/53972/doctoral-education-phd-faculty-science-and-technology>

Additional information

A committee consisting of three representatives from NARA, IMR, and an independent University will evaluate and rank the applicants. Preference will be given to candidates involved in the bilateral project. The project is committed to create an inclusive environment that values diversity and gender balance, hence, encourage all appropriate candidates to apply. Note that a 2nd Ph.D. position will be announced later in 2025 for the candidate to start in January 2026.

For more information and questions on the application process, contact Dr. Prabath Jayasinghe (Head, Marine Biological Resources Division, NARA, Colombo 15), mobile + 94 71 4415788; prabath_jayasinghe@yahoo.com

Applications should be submitted electronically via email to Dr. Prabath Jayasinghe with the following attachments through official channel.

- Cover letter summarizing relevant skills and motivation to apply for the position (1 page)
- CV (summarizing education, positions and academic/research work and scientific publications)
- Certified copies of the Bachelors and Master's degree certificates, transcripts of records
- Two letters of recommendation
- A copy of the Master thesis
- Copies of publications and academic/research work that the applicant wishes the evaluation committee to consider
- Names and contact details of 2-3 references (name, relationship to the candidate, e-mail and telephone number)

Deadline: 06th June 2025