

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

### **About the position**

A 3-year PhD position is vacant under the Sri Lanka-Norway 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 Sri Lanka. The bilateral project runs jointly among 3 institutions in Sri Lanka: the National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA), the Ministry of Fisheries, Aquatic and Ocean Resources (MoF), and the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DFAR). The PhD nominee will be registered as a 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 support the establishment of management practices for sustainable fisheries in Sri Lankan coastal waters. The successful candidate will use an interdisciplinary approach that includes biological data recorded during fishery-dependent and fishery-independent surveys and biological samples of commercial catches to build time series and conduct data analyses. The candidate will work with Norwegian data on data-limited stocks (with a focus on elasmobranchs) and data-limited Sri Lankan stocks facing similar challenges (e.g. small pelagic species). In the absence of reliable catch data per species and fishery for these stocks, the candidate will primarily develop methodologies to infer total catch and catch time-series from the available survey and commercial sampling data, which can then be used to provide management advice using a management strategy evaluation framework. If feasible, CPUE standardization techniques will be applied to produce indices of abundance to be used as stock indicators or in stock assessment models. The parallel research conducted in Sri Lankan and Norwegian waters will enable the applicant to acquire a broader scope in fisheries stock assessment that is necessary for sustainable fisheries management.

The candidate chosen for the PhD position should have background knowledge in statistical survey and sampling design, statistical data analysis, and general knowledge of fishery science. Experience in collecting and handling of landing statistics is an added qualification for this position. The successful candidate will mainly be attached to the Marine Biological Resources Division, NARA, with regular collaboration with the “Deepwater, Cartilaginous, and Shellfish” group mainly working with data-limited stocks and other research groups at IMR, Norway. The candidate will be supervised by highly qualified experts in the research field from IMR and UiB, Norway. The nominee is required to start no later than September 2026, 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 UiB is required. Fieldwork on IMR’s research vessels or aboard commercial fishing fleets, and a research stay at the IMR office in Tromsø, may also be considered.

### **Required qualifications**

- Being a permanent employee at NARA, DFAR or MoF
- 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 should otherwise be documented via English Language standardized tests e.g. TOEFL (minimum score of 90) or IELTS (minimum overall band score of 6.5).

### **Desired skills**

- Experience in fish biology and ecology
- Skills in statistical analyses e.g. basic programming in R or similar programs
- Strong practical, analytical and writing skills in English
- Ambition to publish high-quality articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively as a member of an interdisciplinary scientific team
- Goal-oriented and pro-active on progress reporting
- Field experience aboard research or commercial vessels is advantageous
- Experience with stock assessment is advantageous

### **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 approximately 735,000 LKR will be paid for accommodation and living expenses during the stay in Norway
- The project will assist in finding accommodation in Norway during the period of the candidate's stay

### **PhD training component**

The selected PhD candidate must 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>

We urge the potential candidate to carry out a pre-screening of their education at the UiB, for checking fulfillment of formal requirements to a PhD in Norway. Please forward your transcripts and degree certificates to senior advisor Ingrid Solhøy ([Ingrid.Solhoy@uib.no](mailto:Ingrid.Solhoy@uib.no)) while preparing the final application submission.

#### **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.

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](mailto:prabath_jayasinghe@yahoo.com)

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

- Cover letter summarizing relevant skills and motivation to apply for the position (1 page)
- CV (summarizing education, positions, academic/research work and scientific publications)
- Certified copies of the bachelor's 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)
- No objection letter from the NARA, DFAR and MoF to apply for the position and to support the candidate if they are selected

Deadline: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025

