

ONLINE FREELANCING ENABLES SRI LANKAN YOUTH WITH MORE JOBS AND INCOME

NEWS RELEASE

Online freelancing small and simple jobs distributed through online platforms to workers for greater cost efficiencies across geographic boundaries. Typical “jobs” that are outsourced through platforms include graphic design, data entry, proofreading, translation, copyediting, market research, programming, data verification etc. Online freelancing is growing rapidly and gaining popularity within younger generation in Sri Lanka as it providing avenues to make extra income with ones skills and knowledge while being at home.

LIRNEasia conducted a research to understand the enabling factors and challenges in adopting to work on online freelancing platforms. According survey 26% of the Sri Lankans between the age group 16 to 40 are aware of online freelancing and among those who aware 9% expressed interest in working on online freelancing jobs. LIRNEasia estimates, there could be 17,000 to 22,000 freelancers in Sri Lanka and the number is continuously growing. Uptake of online freelancing has a significant positive socio-economic impact not only on the life of the urban upper- and middle-classes but also on that of the poor and rural areas.

The key highlights of the study are summarized below.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Number of Freelancers In Sri Lanka

- Based on nationally representative survey LIRNEasia estimates, there could be 17,000 to 22,000 freelancers in Sri Lanka registered with multiple platforms and selling their skills all around the world. Fiverr, Freelancer and Upwork are the popular platform used by Sri Lankan youth and Fiverr is the platform with most number of registered workers.

2. Awareness For Online Freelancing & Its Willingness

- About 26% of Sri Lanka’s population aged 16 - 40 olds are aware of online freelancing and males are significantly more aware of such opportunities compared to females. Kurunagala, Anuradhapura, Puttalam are districts with higher awareness about online freelancing while in Kilinochchi, Mannar and Mullaitivu awareness on online freelancing is very poor.
- Among those who aware, only a 9% of the respondent showed interest to work on online freelancing jobs. Willingness is among males were more amenable (11%) to such work, compared to just over half as much (7%) for females.

3. Advantages of online freelancing

- Those engaging in part-time freelancing work, earn a monthly income of approximately Rs.20, 000 - 30,000. This amount is in addition to a salary, since majority of them earn this amount while engaging in some full-time job. This additional earning has helped many freelancers to improve their living standards.
- Online freelancing among youth is preferred due to the flexibility working where one chooses, being your own boss and being able to maximize their skills in an income producing activity.
- Sri Lankan Freelancers say, English skills in not a pre requisite to become successful in this field, just the basic would be adequate to communicate the message to the client.

4. Few concerns when taking freelancing career

- Due to lack of awareness about how freelance payment system work, few workers interviewed in the LIRNEasia study completed work, but were unable to receive payment because PayPal inward remittances were not allowed in Sri Lanka.
- In addition, lower job security, lack of job recognition, inability to maintain work life balances are some of the negatives freelancers encounter while working on platform.

5. How to become an online freelancer

- According to successful freelancers, building a freelance career is easy with the right mix of skills and determination. Anyone can register with an online platform such as fiverr.com, freelancer.com or upwork.com to offer smaller tasks (logo designing, web development, translation), which they are capable of. They have to bid project highlighting and promoting their capacity to undertake particular task. Getting the first job could be tuff and time consuming, but they are determined it wont be impossible, once they get few jobs and build their profile with earnings will start flow easily

THE RESEARCH

Nationwide Survey

LIRNEasia conducted baseline survey among 16-40 years old Sri Lankans to understand the incidence of online freelancing and their willing to work on such jobs. It included 5377 respondents covering all 25 districts of the country and fieldwork was carried out in November 2015 - January 2016. In addition surveys were conducted with current and potential freelancers

Focus Group Discussions With Online Freelancers

The qualitative research was designed to understand people's perceptions and attitudes towards online Freelancing. Six focus group discussions (FGD) and one in-depth interview (IDI) were carried out in the three population centers: Colombo Jaffna and Matara. A total of 28 respondents were interviewed using both methods.

THE CONCLUSION

If sufficient awareness is created among youth regarding online freelancing has the potential to turnaround many lives in the youth. Eventually benefiting the economy by engaging the under-employed or unemployed, and generating the much-required foreign currency revenues.

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