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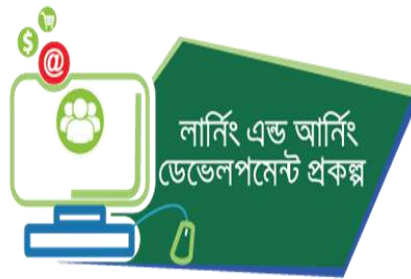
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Information and Communication Technology Division
AGARGAON, ICT Tower, DHAKA-1207

Final Report

Impact Assessment

Of

Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP)



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Abbreviations

8FYP	8 th Five Year Plan
ADP	Annual Development Plan
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BFDS	Bangladesh Freelancers Development Society
DPP	Development of Project Proposals
FGD	Focus Group discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
GDP	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
IT	Information Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ITES	Information Technology Enabled Service
IMED	Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division
LEDP	Learning and Earning Development Project
MoPT	Ministry of Post & Telecommunications
OII	Oxford Internet Institute
PD	Project Director
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunity Threats
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Executive Summary

Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) is a significant initiative taken by Bangladesh ICT Division to provide free training in different freelancing skills in two phases with the purpose to create opportunities for potential unemployed and educated youth of the country. The project is ending in December 2023 and the ministry is thinking about the evaluation of likewise project in 2nd phase or not. In this impact study, as the primary data source, the study conducted beneficiary interviews, focus group discussions with stakeholders, key informant interviews (KII) of experts and case studies. As the secondary data source, the study utilized project reports, DPP etc.

Freelancing started just a decade ago in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Freelancers Development Society (BFDS), the number of registered freelancers has increased by 25% annually over the past five years. The ICT Division puts the number of freelancers in Bangladesh at 6,50,000 and estimates the sector to be worth nearly \$1 billion. According a report of the Oxford Internet Institute, Bangladesh stood 2nd position in regard of number of freelancers in the world. A recent report of Prothom Alo (13 November 2023), 14% of all freelancers working in the world are Bangladeshis. Freelancers earned \$100 million in 2018 and the figure more than doubled next year to \$220 million. Last year, the income shot up to \$500 million. Now it is \$1 billion. Freelancing is set to become a \$10 billion industry by 2026.

Learning and Earning Development Project under ICT Division provided training to 53,000 freelancers covering all Upazillas and Districts of Bangladesh. Out of 53,000 trainees 40,000 youths were given training through virtual platform during covid-19. The Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) ushered new era for educated youths regarding self-employment generation which ultimately contributes for the social and economic growth of the country. Now the successful freelancers are creating agencies and giving employment to other unemployment youths making them important earning member of the family.

This survey has done after about 2 years of the completing the training of LEDP. In this mean time we find that a significant number of respondents have been employed in different institutions and one-fifth started freelancing after completing course. But

about 40% is still unemployed even after receiving training, there is scope to do something for them. The study finding reveals that unemployment rate is higher among the female participants. 28.6% of the male are unemployed where 54.2% female are unemployed. If LEDP project is extended in the 2nd Phase, LEDP may take some initiatives for these trained unemployed youths, such initiatives will increase the sustainability of the programme.

LEDP is transforming demographic dividend to *economic dividend* resulting in generating self-employment for the huge number of educated unemployed youths of the country. About 60% of the respondents have seen an increase in their earnings after the training because of the skills and knowledge they have gained from the training. Also LEDP is first initiative in Bangladesh to empower rural women through ICT and played a vital role to include young rural women in the journey towards “Digital Bangladesh”. LEDP helped to build a strong network of talented women, who are now contributing through ICT as much as men.

More than 60% respondents were satisfied with the training, where another 5% respondents were very satisfied. Besides, 28.7% respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. But rest 4% (12) respondents were not satisfied with the training. The result shows that LEDP offered the development of the participant’s English communication skill in 63.2% cases. Almost all the respondents said that they would recommend the training to others. Around 90% of the respondents suggested for increasing the number of trainees, since they think that it more unemployed youth should get the opportunity. Almost all the participants recommended to renew LEDP to 2nd phase since they have seen it beneficiary to the youth, family and the country.

The LEDP encounters management challenges spanning resource allocation, curriculum design, and participant engagement. LEDP portal shows that more than 4 lac training seekers registered for getting freelancing training but according to the DPP of the project and resource constraint only total 53,000 youths could be trained up. One of the main challenges of LEDP was selection of eligible trainees and training providing vendors. Secondly, monitoring of training system and mechanisms for ensuring better quality of training for the huge number of freelancers was another challenge.

To ensure the sustainable growth of the freelance sector, it is imperative to establish a robust regulatory framework that safeguards the rights and interests of freelancers. Also, significant investment in technological infrastructure is warranted. Fostering

partnerships with global freelancing platforms and clients can open up new avenues for Bangladeshi freelancers to access international markets. This technological empowerment will be instrumental in elevating the competitiveness of Bangladeshi freelancers in the global market.

Lack of proper guidelines and mentoring from LEDP can lead to drop out the freelancers from mainstream of freelancing activities. In a report, 30% accounts in Fiverr is becoming disabled every year. In order to ensure sustainability of the LEDP project and enhance its benefit, establishing a freelancer academy is of utmost importance.

To tackle the challenges of 4th industrial revolution, Bangladesh is focusing on creating skilled human resources who will have proper digital knowledge to cope with fast-changing development in coming days. LEDP is serving this purpose, hence the project should be extended to the 2nd phase. In today's professional landscape, the advanced courses such as data analysis software SPSS, Architecture software AutoCAD, Accounting software Excel or Tally, programming, Artificial Intelligence etc. should be included in the next phase of LEDP to increase earning opportunity of the freelancers.

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Chapter One

Project Activities and Study Methodology

1.1 Background of the Project & the Study

As part of Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh approved a Project titled "Learning and Earning Development Project" to be implemented by the ICT Division of the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology. Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) is a significant initiative taken by ICT Division to provide free training in different freelancing skills with the purpose to create opportunities for potential unemployed and educated youths of the country. The goal of the LEDP project was to develop skilled human resources through leveraging ICT for the country's next stage of growth and development. The project is ending in December 2023 and the ministry is thinking about the evaluation of likewise project for the justification of taking LEDP in 2nd phase. In this context, for decision-making, it is necessary to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the completed LEDP project and publish a report on the research findings.

1.2 Objectives of the LEDP Project

- To provide professional outsourcing training to participants to create skilled IT manpower.
- To expose outsourcing capabilities in the IT/ICT era to global market.
- To create a new job facility in the global market and improve national awareness at all levels.
- To catalyze the growth of Bangladesh's IT/ICT industry for employment creation.
- To Create master trainers in freelancing area to disseminate the training program in the grassroots level.
- To materialize the increase of foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh by outsourcing diversification.



- To evaluate the stakeholder progress, services, survey, and expected output cum information.

1.3 Log frame of the LEDP Project

Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of Verification (MOV)	Important Assumptions (IA)
<p>Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To leverage ICT for the country's next stage of growth and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Growth in the number of e-government services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7th Five Year Plan , National ICT Policy 2015, "Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh" & other development guidelines. 	<p>--</p>
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To train 40,000 Participants through Professional Outsourcing Training (in online platform) for creating skilled IT manpower. ▪ To train 13,000 Participants for Professional Outsourcing Training and develop them as skilled manpower to be a freelancer in IT/ICT sector. ▪ To expose outsourcing capabilities in IT/ICT era into global market. ▪ To create a new job facilities in the global market and improved national awareness in all level. ▪ To train 20,000 women on IT Literacy in the grass root level. ▪ To facilitate training activities of 1,66,320 women on IT Literacy in the grass root level with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BBS employment index/ Bangladesh Bank foreign reserve index/World Economic Forum's Network Readiness index etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IT Industry/ statistics from BBS/Bangladesh Bank report/Software Associations' report/World Economic Forum report/Global IT report etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong support of the GOB/IT Industry/ Software Associations for the continued development of e-government foundations across the country.



Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of Verification (MOV)	Important Assumptions (IA)
<p>Caravan (Digital Training Bus).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To catalyze growth of Bangladesh's IT/ICT industry for employment creation. ▪ To materialize the increase of foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh by outsourcing diversification. 			
<p>Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 20,000 women are skilled through IT/ICT Literacy Training ▪ 53,000 freelancers are ready for IT/ICT online outsourcing in the global market. ▪ 1,920 media workers are awarded in different capacity. ▪ 78 officials are oriented in IT/ICT sector with different capacity. ▪ To facilitate training activities of 1, 66,320 women on IT Literacy in the grass root level with Caravan (Digital Training Bus). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of IT/ICT freelancers. ▪ Number of GOB officials that have participated e-government seminars/workshop etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Industry statistics from industry associations/ consulting companies. ▪ Implementation records of ICTD. ▪ Monitoring/completion reports of IMED. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trained person or freelancers or associations are efficient. ▪ International market is available for outsourcing. ▪ Expertises are utilized for e-generation. ▪ National and international IT industry is ready to partner to build e-government foundations.
<p>Inputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training programs for freelancer in IT/ICT skills for online outsourcing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 11880 skilled freelancers are ready about online outsourcing by December 2018. ▪ 1,920 skilled media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monthly, Quarterly reports to IMED, FD etc. ▪ Reports in ADP meeting of ICTD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timely appointment of project personnel. ▪ Timely establishment



Narrative Summary	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of Verification (MOV)	Important Assumptions (IA)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Capacity building program for ICTD & other stakeholders. ▪ Facilitate training activities of 1,66,320 women on IT Literacy in the grass root level with Caravan (Digital Training Bus) by December 2018. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> workers are ready in IT/ICT by December 2018. ▪ 78 skilled officials are ready in IT/ICT by December 2018 ▪ To facilitate training activities of 1,66,320 women on IT Literacy in the grass root level with Caravan (Digital Training Bus) by December 2018. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> of PMU. ▪ No disruption in flow of funds.

1.4 Activities of the LEDP Project

Training and Skill Development:

- Courses and programs to enhance digital literacy and ICT skills.
- Training on specific tools, technologies, and software relevant to the local job market.

Online Learning Platforms:

- Provision of online platforms or resources for remote learning.

Internship and Practical Experience:

- Opportunities for hands-on experience through internships or practical projects.

Industry Collaboration:

- Collaboration with industries to align training programs with market demands.
- Involvement of private sector companies to provide real-world insights and mentorship.

Certification and Recognition:

- Issuing certifications upon the completion of training programs to enhance employability.

Laptop to Highest Earning trainee:

- Awarding a laptop upon program completion to boost employability. The top earner in each 20-student batch receives a laptop; two laptops are awarded per batch.



LEDP Trainee Modules:

- The training modules have been developed by a committee of BUET and DU professors having expertise in the concerned field. Both IT skill consultants and English language consultants had also contribution regarding this. The project successfully trained 53 thousands youths in freelancing skills, and the modules are now available for download on the project's website.

Basic ICT training to female learners using Digital Caravan Buses:

- The LEDP project has deployed a Remote training with 6 Digital Caravan buses to offer basic ICT training. The aim was to introduce individuals to MS Word, Excel, and the fundamentals of computers. Training was delivered through the Digital Caravan platform. ICT Division and Huawei Technologies and Robi Axiata jointly provided ICT training to more than 57,000 girls through Digital Caravan Buses.

Job Placement Support:

- Mentoring and guidance for job placement through career counseling, job fairs, or placement services.

Entrepreneurship Development:

- Support for those interested in starting their own ventures through entrepreneurship training.

Infrastructure and Technology:

- Ensuring access to necessary technology, such as computers and internet connectivity.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- Regular assessment and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

Government Support and Policy Framework:

- Alignment with government policies and support to ensure sustainability.

1.5 Facilitation of ICT Training for Rural Women in LEDP Project

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) education has been identified as one of the key catalysts for women empowerment in the developing countries. In Bangladesh, women residing in the rural areas and having potentials to contribute significantly in the country's development were offered basic ICT training in their locality. More than 70% of our population still resides in the rural areas, where even basic ICT trainings can hardly be provided. In a context like this- to attain the vision of a Digital Bangladesh-the rural women having Secondary School Certificates need to be facilitated with ICT trainings so that they can use their untapped potential and start contributing not only to their livelihood but also communities as a whole.



ICT Division of the Ministry of Post & Telecommunications (MoPT), conducted the LEDP project activates to launch an ambitious reach for the development of rural women across different parts of Bangladesh. Six (06) buses, fully equipped with modern ICT training facilities, were successfully deployed to offer ICT training particularly designed for the women who cannot move from their native locality due to various socio-economic constraints. Robi Axiata and Huawei - these two companies helped to make this activity successful. This project is a first-of-its-kind initiative in Bangladesh to empower rural women through ICT and played a vital role to include young rural women in the journey towards “Digital Bangladesh”.



Photo 1.1 : Inauguration of Digital Caravan Buses for ICT training by Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina on 12 December 2016.

In the long-run, this project aims to help build a strong network of talented women, who can contribute through ICT as much as men. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasizes on women empowerment and promotion of ICT at every sphere of life. Through this, government is prioritizing the promotion of women’s entrepreneurship enhancing the capabilities of women. It is believed that these steps would make them more productive, self-sufficient and their initiatives would be beneficial for social and economic development too. It is hoped that they will actively contribute to the development of the community and national economy. The project generated massive interest among the women, especially in rural areas, to pursue entrepreneurship through ICT. This project popularized the ICT education not only among women but also among other school and college students. The buses moved from Upazilla to Upazilla and dispensed IT and outsourcing basic education among the young



rural educated women including student of high school and colleges. The training was provided by the programmer of ICT Division under the control and guidance of the Deputy Commissioner and Upazilla Nirbahi Officers. LEDP Project Authority coordinated and supervised the total training. Training materials like pen, pad, modules, trainer, refreshment etc were facilitated free of cost.

The ICT Division started the training in a festive mood through the inauguration ceremony by Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina on 12 December 2016. A modest design for the ICT training bus was developed providing full furnished training facilities to conduct comfortable training class within the bus keeping the spaces of chair, table, laptop, electricity, 3G data connectivity, light, air cooler, projector for power point presentation etc can roam all over the country including rural areas, where roads are not feasible for low height vehicles. Finally, they came up with a full fledged plan, where buses can move one district to another and train basic ICT knowledge towards the students of different rural school, colleges. Developed the Wi-Fi facility, Information Communication Technology Division designed the training module for the aforesaid training.



Photo 1.2 : Girls are entering into Digital Caravan Buses for basic ICT training.

The special feature of the digital training buses was air-conditioned, soundproof, and equipped with 23 workstations per vehicle. Training facility infrastructure included one



laptop per trainee, large format LED screens, sound system, Wi-Fi, customized training modules, learning software, and stand-by generator. ICT ministry and Market Access providers Ltd. worked very closely to finalize the route plan of six ICT training buses, coordination between local administrative authorities to aware the local women, registration process etc. Each bus had individual route plan, and a bus operated 40 weeks a year. Each location had one or two days of training depending on local participants' number and requirements. These buses were maintained by Robi Axiata and Huawei Technologies in collaboration with ICT Division. Once, the ICT training was completed in a locality, the buses were used for road show purpose to generate ICT related awareness among the young students of that locality.

The Government of Bangladesh is moving ahead to its digitalization plan, establishing justice and ensuring delivery of government services to the citizens of Bangladesh through maximum use of technology, with the ultimate goal being the overall improvement of the daily lifestyle of general people. A 3-year preliminary project of 06 buses had a target of providing basic ICT training to 1,66,320 young and talented women covering 64 districts across Bangladesh. It was expected that this initiative will have multi-fold benefits in empowering rural women from distant areas. Providing basic ICT training to rural educated women created a database of ICT trained rural youth having potential to contribute to their community through ICT (facilitating future leadership at local hubs), generated employment and created enthusiasm around women entrepreneurship through ICT.

1.6 Cost, Finance and coverage area of the Project

1.6.1 Revised Cost of the Project (in Lakh Taka):

(Taka in Lakh)

	Original	Estimated Cost (1st Revision)	Estimated Cost (2nd Revision)	Estimated Cost (Inter Cost Component Adjustment)	Estimated Cost (2 nd Inter component cost adjustment) No Cost Extension	Difference (3-2/5-4)	
						In Taka	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total	18039.99	18039.99	31977.16	31977.16	31977.16	0	0
GOB	18039.99	18039.99	31977.16	31977.16	31977.16	0	0
P. A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Own Fund	-	-	-	-	-	-	-



Others (Specify)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
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1.6.2 Mode of Financing with Source (Latest Revision):

(Taka in Lakh)

Source Mode	GOB (FE)	PA (RPA)	Own Fund (FE)	Others (Specify)	PA Source
1	2	3	4	5	6
Loan/Credit	-	-	-	-	-
Grant	31977.16	-	-	-	-
Equity	-	-	-	-	-
Others (Specify)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	31977.16	-	-	-	-

1.6.3 Year-wise Estimated Cost:

(In Lakh Taka)

Financial Year	Project version	Approved / Estimated cost				Total
		GOB (FE)	Project Aid (PA)		DPA	
			RPA			
			Through GOB	Special Account		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Year-1 FY: 2013-2014	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	0				0
	1 st Revised	0				0
	Original	488.30				488.30
Year-2 FY: 2014-2015	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	0				0
	1 st revised	0				0
	Original	3184.92				3184.92
Year-3 FY: 2015-2016	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	0				0
	1 st revised	4442.40				4442.40



Financial Year	Project version	Approved / Estimated cost				Total
		GOB (FE)	Project Aid (PA)		DPA	
			RPA			
			Through GOB	Special Account		
	Original	4442.40				4442.40
Year-4 FY: 2016-2017	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	3483.46				3483.50
	1 st revised	3483.50				3483.50
	Original	3483.50				3483.50
Year-5 FY: 2017-2018	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	4584.74				4584.74
	1 st revised	4584.74				4584.74
	Original	4584.74				4584.74
Year-6 FY: 2018-2019	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	2 nd Revised	538.73				538.73
	1 st revised	538.73				538.73
	Original	538.73				538.73
Year-7 FY: 2019-2020	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	2466.07				2466.07
	2 nd Revised	2466.07				2466.07
	1 st revised	2466.07				2466.07
	Original	2466.07				2466.07
Year-8 FY: 2020-2021	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	6034.16				6034.16
	2 nd Revised	6034.16				6034.16
	1 st revised	6034.16				6034.16
	Original	6034.16				6034.16
Year-9	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	0				0



Financial Year	Project version	Approved / Estimated cost				Total
		GOB (FE)	Project Aid (PA)		DPA	
			RPA			
			Through GOB	Special Account		
FY: 2021-2022	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	4025.97				4025.97
	2nd Revised	4025.97				4025.97
	1st revised	4025.97				4025.97
	Original	4025.97				4025.97
Year-10 FY: 2022-2023	2 nd Inter Component Cost Adjustment	2728.41				2728.41
	Inter Component Cost Adjustment	2728.41				2728.41
	2nd Revised	2728.41				2728.41
	1st revised	2728.41				2728.41
	Original	2728.41				2728.41
Total		31977.16				31977.16

1.6.4 Location of the Project:

Division	District	Upazila / City Corporation / Paurashava
8	64	492

1.7 Objectives of the Assignment

General Objectives

1. To assess the success of the LEDP project in achieving its goal through the quantitative and qualitative survey.
2. Providing the survey report as a publication.

Specific Objectives

An impact evaluation assessment is expected to measure the status of all indicators as defined in the logical framework and as well as identified in consultation with the project team. This enables project progress compared to defined indicators as project goal, objectives, output and outcomes. The goal of this survey was to provide double difference comparative analysis between the defined outcome and impact indicators of LEDP that can be used to evaluate the impact of the component before and after the project, with and without the project activities. The impact evaluation report is to be used for monitoring benchmark of and later, evaluating the project implementation. Major objectives of the assignment are:



- a) To understand extent of Project Background, Objective, Status of Approval and Amendment, Project Cost, Duration, Financing, output, outcome and impact phase in respect to DPP and Log Frame and all other relevant information.
- b) To capture the current level of household income and employment opportunities to compare between before and after, with or without project scenario.
- c) To review of overall strength, lacking, weakness or inconsistency using SWOT analysis and providing necessary recommendation to overcome lacking/weakness.
- d) To compare changes of project goal and objectives for implementing project activities based on different national/local information.

1.8 Specific task of the Assignment

The specific task of quantitative & qualitative verification were done as per the survey and evaluation rule/guidelines in this context. Specification includes the following:

1. Conduct a telephone/online survey on 600 persons who obtained training from the LEDP project using a specific questionnaire.
2. Conducting 5 FGDs.
3. Conducting 5 Case studies.
4. Conducting 5 KIIs.
5. Entry and analysis of survey data.
6. Writing report and presentation of the report.
7. Providing 25 copies of printed reports to LEDP.

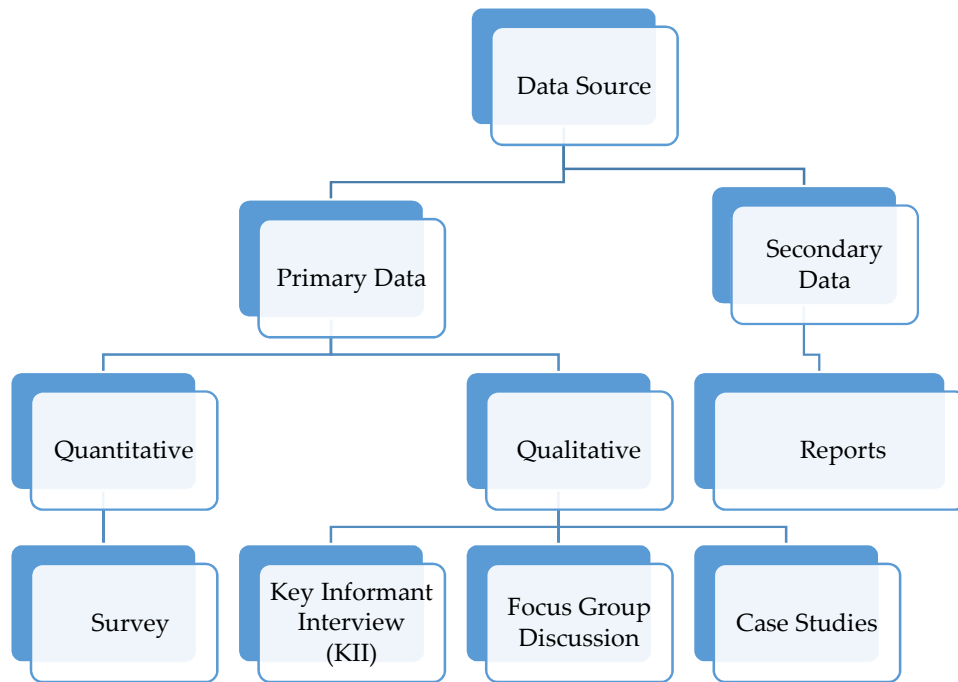
1.9 Study Methodology

1.9.1 Data Collection Methodology

This study requires a deep analytical approach. Qualitative research tries to discover the main issues by understanding the underlying meaning through preliminary concepts and analysis. The effectiveness of the research depends on the proper analysis of the obtained quantitative data. As the primary data source, the study conducted beneficiary interviews, focus group discussions with stakeholders, key informant interviews (KII) of experts and case studies. As the secondary data source, the study utilized project reports, DPP etc. Therefore, an inductive thematic approach was applied to analyze the data to achieve the research results. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software SPSS. The data collection approach are shown in the figure below:



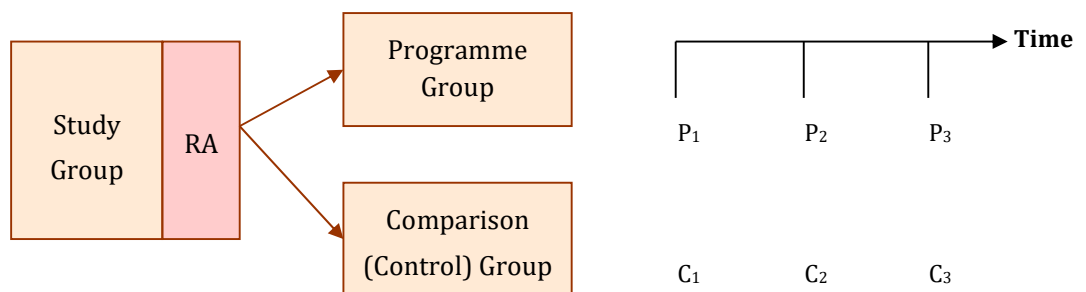
Figure 1.1: Data collection methodologies



1.9.2 Study Design

The changes in the project area are the outcome of interventions and other factors. The design appropriate for assessing the effect of interventions distinct from the effects of other factors is true experimental design, developed by Cambell and Stanley (1996). True Experimental Design is as follows:

Figure 1.2 : The Study Design



In this design subjects are randomly assigned (RA). If not, then it is quasi-experimental design. The three measurements P1, P2, P3 refer to project and C1, C2 and C3 refer to control areas, P1 and C1 are bench mark data for project and control areas respectively. P2 and C2 would be follow-up data and P3, C3 would be survey data to be conducted in future. True experimental design is the strongest design in terms of validity, and the project authority rightly selected the design.

Gross outcome $P_2 - P_1$ = effect of PRP and other factors in project areas.

Gross outcome $C_2 - C_1$ = effect of the other factors in comparison areas

Effect of Intervention = $(P_2 - P_1) - (C_2 - C_1)$, known as double difference formula

$$= (P_2 - C_2) - (P_1 - C_1)$$

$$= (P_2 - C_2) \text{ if } P_1 = C_1 = \text{at the baseline.}$$

If $P_2 - C_2$ is statistically significant, then the impact is evident.

Following the ToR, it was one of the responsibilities of the consultants to analyze and make a comparative review in the light of baseline information of what has changed as a result of project activities and objectives of the project. Since there was no baseline survey, hence baseline data were collected from the beneficiaries who were considered under the survey, and a comparative review of what changes have taken place as a result of project implementation were conducted.

1.9.3 Sampling Design

The sample size was estimated through an approach based on confidence level and precision rate. For this purpose, following formula was used to calculate the household sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times q}{e_2} \times \text{Design Effect (D)} \dots \dots \dots (i)$$

Where, n = Sample size (to be determined)

p = Proportion of success indicator (in this case, p is the percentage of beneficiaries=50%)

q = 1-P (=1-50%=50%)=0.50

Z = the value of standard variation at a given confidence level.

For P=0.5, the value of n (sample size) would be the maximum and the sample will yield at least the desired precision.

For this study,



- p = 0.5
- q = 0.5
- Z = 1.96 (normal curve for 95% confidence level)
- e = Margin of error or precision level (assumed as 0.04, i.e. the estimate should be within 4% of the true value)
- D = 1.0 as the design effect

Putting these value in equation ----- (i),

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{(0.04)^2} \times 1.0 \text{ (design effect)}$$

$$= 600.25 \approx 600$$

Considering the 95% level of confidence and 4% precision rate and design effect = 1.0, the minimum sample size required is 600.

1.9.4 Qualitative Data Collection Techniques

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A total of 5 focus group discussions were organized in the survey. 10 to 14 participants were considered in each of the group discussions. The important points of the discussion were recorded. All types of stakeholders and local individuals were present in the group discussion. The main purpose of this group discussion was to get feedback from the people about the overall activities of the project. The main topic of group discussion were the benefits, strengths, weakness, opportunity and risk relationships that exist during the implementation of the projects; the role of the project in increasing earnings of the participants.

Key Informant Interview (KII)

A total of 5 KII were arranged in the survey. KII focuses on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis of project implementation with the individuals implementing the projects. Also Sustainability of the LEDP project was discussed in KII.



Case Study

In the study, 5 case studies were conducted, most successful freelancers (who received training from LEDP) were interviewed; information on their success history, struggles and present position were collected and included in this impact evaluation survey report.

1.9.5 Deliverables of the Study

The Consultant delivered the following to the client :

1. Data collection instruments.
2. Soft copy and hard copy of data.
3. Draft report
4. Presented draft report in ICT Ministry.
5. 25 printed hard copies of Final Report

1.10 Work Plan of the Study

Total activities to be undertaken were determined by the consultants and then time has been allocated to perform that task in a systematic manner. It has been found that some of the tasks can be performed simultaneously while some others are to be started just after completion of a certain task. Based on our previous experiences in implementing similar assignments, a work programme (work schedule) of 6 weeks has been prepared. The **Work Schedule** is furnished below in the form of Bar chart.

Figure 1.3 : Work Plan of the research study

Activities		Gantt Chart of the Activities							
		Timeframe: In Days							
		5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
1	Mobilization of the Study Team								
2	Finalization of survey questionnaire								
3	Field Work for Data Collection								
4	Data Cleaning								
5	Data Processing & Analysis								
6	Preparation of Draft Report								
7	Draft finding sharing with client								
8	Finalization of the Report								



1.11 Photo Gallery of Project Activities



Photo 1.3 : Inauguration of Digital Caravan Buses for ICT training by Honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina on 12 December 2016.



Photo 1.4 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP distributing certificates to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) in Jhalokati.





Photo 1.5 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP is distributing certificates to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) in Jhalokati.



Photo 1.6 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP is distributing laptops to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Narayanganj.





Photo 1.7 : Project Director of LEDP Md. Humayun Kobir discussing with the successful freelancers at Narayanganj.



Photo 1.8 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP is distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Bandarban.





Photo 1.9 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Rangpur.



Photo 1.10 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP is distributing cheque to a women entrepreneur at Bogra Smart Employment Fair arranged by LEDP.





Photo 1.11 : Smart Employment Fair in Bogura arranged by LEDP.



Photo 1.12 : Honorable Secretary of ICT Division Md. Shamsul Arefin giving speech in certificate giving and job fair ceremony (arranged by LEDP) in Dhaka.



Photo 1.13 : Project personnel, freelancers and stakeholders at LEDP job fair held at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, Dhaka.



Photo 1.14 : Honourable Secretary of ICT Division is giving speech as the chief guest in a job fair and laptop distribution ceremony arranged by LEDP at Chottogram.





প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের মাঝে ল্যাপটপ বিতরণ করছেন তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের সচিব মো. সামসুল আরেফিন

স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশ বিনির্মাণে স্মার্ট সিটিজেন তৈরির বিকল্প নেই

চট্টগ্রামে তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের সচিব

সরকারের তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের সচিব মো. সামসুল আরেফিন বলেছেন, ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশের স্বপ্নদৃষ্টা প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার সুযোগ্য পুত্র ও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আইসিটি বিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা সজীব ওয়াজেদ জয়ের নেতৃত্বে বাংলাদেশ তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি খাতে দ্রুত এগিয়ে যাচ্ছে। আমরা ইতোমধ্যে ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ বিনির্মাণসহ মধ্যম আয়ের দেশে উন্নীত হয়েছি। আগামী ২০৪১ সালের মধ্যে স্মার্ট বাংলাদেশ বিনির্মাণ করতে হলে স্মার্ট সিটিজেন তৈরির বিকল্প নেই। গতকাল সোমবার নগরীর লেডিস ক্লাবে তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগ কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নকৃত লার্নিং অ্যান্ড আর্নিং ডেভেলপমেন্ট প্রকল্পের আওতায় ডিজিটাল মার্কেটিং, ওয়েব ডিজাইন অ্যান্ড ডেভেলপমেন্ট ও গ্রাফিক্স ডিজাইন কোর্সের প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের মাঝে সনদপত্র, ল্যাপটপ বিতরণ ও চাকুরি মেলার অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তব্যে তিনি এসব কথা বলেন। এলডিইপি লট-৯, বিটুএম টেকনোলজিস লিঃ, আইডিয়াটেক লিঃ ও রোমোটিক লিঃ-এর বাস্তবায়নে জেলা প্রশাসন, তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগ অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজন করেন। অনুষ্ঠানে লার্নিং অ্যান্ড আর্নিং প্রকল্পের অধীনে প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত ১২১ জন ফি-ল্যাপসারের মাঝে ল্যাপটপ ও সনদপত্র তুলে দেন প্রধান অতিথি। এর পর চাকুরি মেলার বিভিন্ন স্টল পরিদর্শন করেন তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের সচিব মো. সামসুল আরেফিনসহ অন্যান্য অতিথিবৃন্দ। এ প্রকল্পের অধীনে চট্টগ্রাম জেলায় ৭০টি ব্যাচে মোট ১ হাজার ৪ শ জনের প্রশিক্ষণ সমাপ্ত হয়েছে। তন্মধ্যে সর্বোচ্চ উপার্জনকারীদের মাঝে ল্যাপটপ ও অন্যান্যদের মাঝে সনদপত্র বিতরণ করা হয়। চট্টগ্রাম জেলা প্রশাসক আবুল বাসার মোহাম্মদ ফখরুজ্জামানের সভাপতিত্বে ডিজিটাল মার্কেটিং, ৫ম পৃষ্ঠার ৭ম কলাম

Photo 1.15 : News in media regarding job fair and laptop distribution ceremony arranged by LEDP at Chottogram.





Photo 1.16 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP and Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Planning are distributing laptops to successful LEDP trained freelancers at Chandpur.



Photo 1.17 : Honorable State Minister of ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP and Honorable with Successful freelancers of Chandpur who received laptop from LEDP.





Photo 1.18 : Joint Secretary of ICT Division Md. Ataur Rahman Khan and Project Director of LEDP officers, Asst. Programmer, Mymensingh and other stakeholders visiting Job Fair at Mymensingh.



Photo 1.19 : Joint Secretary of ICT Division Md. Ataur Rahman Khan with the successful freelancers in Mymensingh.





Photo 1.20: Joint Secretary of ICT Division Md. Ataur Rahman Khan giving speech to freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Netrokona.



Photo 1.21 : Honorable former Senior Secretary of ICT Division N M Zeaul Alam distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Noakhali.





Photo 1.22 : Project Director of LEDP Humayun Kobir and Deputy Project Director of LEDP Md. Shariful Islam distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Sylhet.



Photo 1.23 : Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) in Sylhet.





Photo 1.24 : Successful freelancers of Sylhet received laptop from LEDP.



Photo 1.25 : Project Director of LEDP Md. Humayun Kobir is giving speech in Smart Employment Fair arranged for freelancers by LEDP at Khulna University.





Photo 1.26 : Freelancers sharing their views and experiences in Smart Employment fair arranged by LEDP at Khulna University.



Photo 1.27 : Project Director and Deputy Project Director of LED, Khulna University professors and other stakeholders visiting Divisional Smart Employment Fair at Khulna University.





Photo 1.28 : Deputy Secretary of ICT Division Mst. Aspia Aktar distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Jashore.



Photo 1.29 : Honorable former Senior Secretary of ICT Division N M Zeaul Alam distributing laptop to successful freelancers (trained by LEDP) at Sheikh Hasina Software Technology Park, Jashore.





Photo 1.30 : Successful freelancers with laptops at Sheikh Hasina Software Technology Park, Jashore.



Photo 1.31 : Project Director Md. Humayun Kobir with freelancers trained by LEDP at Sheikh Hasina Software Technology Park, Jashore.





Photo 1.32 : Project Director of LEDP Md. Humayun Kobir distributing certificates to successful freelancers at Tangail.



Photo 1.33 : A physically challenged successful freelancer (below, trained by LEDP) along with other freelancers showing their certificates received from LEDP at Tangail.





Photo 1.34 : Project Director of LEDP Humayun Kobir along with DC and SP, Khagrachari distributing certificates to successful freelancers at Khagrachhari.



Photo 1.35 : LEDP trained freelancers received certificates at Khagrachhari.





Photo 1.36 : Smart job fair at Habiganj.



Photo 1.37 : Successful freelancers received laptops from LEDP at Naogaon.



Photo 1.38 : Project Director of LEDP Humayun Kobir attended as Special Guest in Freelancers Conference arranged by BASIS at Dhaka.



Photo 1.39 : A successful female freelancer trained by LEDP is telling her success story in a TV Talk show on freelancing arranged by ATN Bangla.





Photo 1.40 : Project Director of LEDP Humayun Kobir attended in a TV Talk show on freelancing arranged by Nexus TV.



Photo 1.41 : A physically challenged freelancer Hasanul Islam (left) telling his struggle and success story in a TV Talk show on freelancing.



Photo 1.42: Professor Dr. Mohammad Ahsan Uddin (Team Leader of the Study) presenting the impact assessment report of LEDP at the ICT Division.



Photo 1.43 : Digital Caravan Buses of LEDP for providing basic ICT training to the young girls.





হরকলি বহুমুখী কাজিল (ডিগ্রী) মাদরাসা মাঠে অনুষ্ঠিত রংপুর স্মার্ট কর্মসংস্থান মেলা ২০২৩ এর উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে ভিডিও কনফারেন্সের মাধ্যমে যুক্ত হয়ে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তৃতা করেন তথা ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি প্রতিমন্ত্রী জুনাইদ আহমেদ পলাক। (সোমবার, ৩ জুলাই, ২০২৩)-পিআইডি, রংপুর।

Photo 1.44: Honourable State Minister of ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak, MP is giving speech as the Chief Guest at the Smart Employment Fair arranged by LEDP at Horkoli Fazil (Degree) Madrasah, Rangpur Sadar, Rangpur.



Photo 1.45: Smart Employment Fair by LEDP at American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB).





Photo 1.46: Additional Secretary, ICT Division Mohammad Navid Safiullah is giving speech as the chief guest of Smart Employment Fair at AIUB (25 November 2023).



Photo 1.47: Smart Employment Fair by LEDP at AIUB (25 November 2023).





Photo 1.48: News in media regarding Smart Employment Fair arranged by LEDP at AIUB (25 November 2023).



Photo 1.49 : Jannatul Ferdousi, a successful LEDP freelancer of Jamalpur is telling her success history in an interview.



Chapter Two

Freelancing: Global Industry and Bangladesh Perspective

2.1 Freelancing

The utilization of information technology and the internet has led to the emergence of a novel workforce that is not restricted to working for a particular firm inside certain office hours; instead, they have the flexibility to work at their preferred time and location under their chosen contractual arrangements (Rahman & Rahman, 2017). These individuals who possess specialized expertise in a certain field and secure contracts from various firms to operate as independent contractors are commonly referred to as freelancers, independent professionals, or online contractors (Van den Born & Van Witteloostuijn, 2013). And the jobs they do are generally considered as freelancing.

Gheorghe (2015) conducted a comprehensive analysis of freelancing and its future trajectory. The study highlights that the term "freelancer" initially referred to journalists who offered their expertise to multiple press organizations instead of being employed by a single entity. Over time, this term expanded to encompass other professionals, including graphic designers, multimedia content writers, and IT specialists, who also provided their services in a similar manner. Van den Born & Van Witteloostuijn (2013) have identified freelance workers as a novel category of workers that has emerged since the late 1990s.

There are two different ways of earning in freelancing. One is active earning which refer to earning directly by working with the client. The other is passive earning, which is earning by working from different marketplace.



2.2 Freelancing: a Global Industry

The field of freelancing has experienced a worldwide upsurge in recent years, characterized by a substantial rise in the global population of freelancers. Based on a survey of 2,000 Payoneer clients from over 100 countries involved in worldwide client business, the average global hourly freelancing rate is \$28 (Payoneer, 2022). Projections suggest that the worldwide freelancing market economy is expected to achieve a value of \$455 billion USD by the year 2023 (Flexiple, 2020). The gig economy in the United States saw significant expansion, with freelance incomes experiencing a surge of up to 78% in 2019 (Bawabba, 2020). According to Payoneer (2022), the fields of programming, marketing, and finance had a significant rise in demand.



Figure 2.1: *Highest Paying Freelance Jobs*

(Source: Payoneer Blog, Published on 25/02/2023)

The survey results additionally emphasize that younger freelancers have primarily benefited from the heightened demand, but more experienced freelancers have encountered a minor deceleration (Payoneer, 2022). Although women in the freelancing sector have made progress in terms of improved representation and educational achievement, the gender pay gap has



continued to grow since 2020 (Payoneer, 2022). These fields have witnessed a surge in demand both domestically and internationally:

The COVID-19 epidemic caused significant disruptions in the global work economy. Nevertheless, freelancers, especially those in the younger age group, experienced an increase in both the demand for their services and the amount they charge per hour in the previous year (Payoneer, 2022). The versatility and pliability inherent in freelancing have been beneficial for customers managing the uncertainties brought by disruptions caused by the pandemic. Freelancers have been crucial in fulfilling vital roles for companies, acting as a lifeline during moments like the 'great resignation' or when market volatility requires a more adaptable workforce (Payoneer, 2022).

Average hourly freelancing rate varies by region, the freelancers of North America receives highest hourly rate (\$ 44 per hour), freelancers of Western Europe receives 2nd highest hourly rate (\$ 31 per hour) and freelancers of South America receives 3rd highest hourly rate (\$ 24 per hour). The freelancers of Asia region receives only \$22 per hour, where Bangladeshi freelancers receives only \$15 per hour.

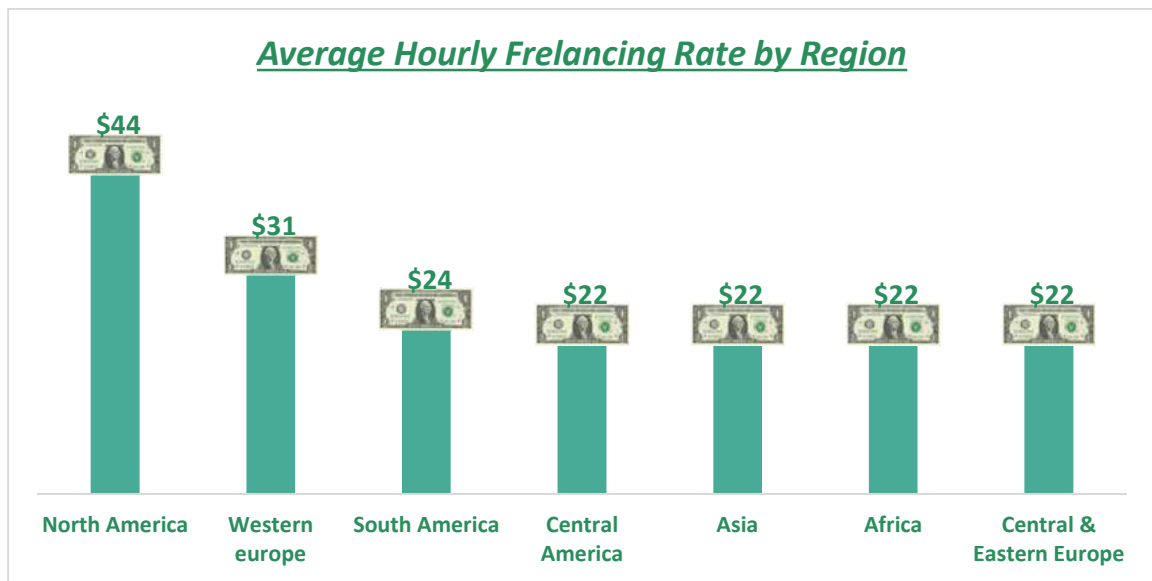


Figure 2.2: Average Hourly Freelancing Rate by Region

(Graph Design: Author's own creation , Data Source: Payoneer Blog, Published on 25/02/2023)



2.3 Factors Influencing Freelancing in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has one of the biggest population densities of any country in the world. A big chunk of the people living in Bangladesh are young. Unemployment is a big problem in Bangladesh; about half of new college graduates don't have jobs (Rahman & Rahman, 2017). Additionally, there should be more entrepreneurs in Bangladesh to help create jobs for the country's large population. As it is, many educated people are lost in their search for stable work. With all these things in mind, freelancing is quickly becoming one of the best ways for young people in developing countries like Bangladesh to find work.

Uncertainty regarding employment opportunities in Bangladesh is the primary factor driving the expansion of freelancing. Educated adolescents are facing a dearth of employment opportunities, and the expanding young demographic is growing increasingly dissatisfied with the saturated professional sector's nepotism, favoritism, and lack of opportunity. Second, local businesses hardly treat their employees with the bare minimum of decency; underpayment and overwork are prevalent issues that affect a significant number of job holders in the market.

Additionally, time-consuming traffic and rigid work schedules are factors that discourage young people from entering the local labor force. By operating as a freelancer, an individual can augment their income while reducing their workload, gain considerable flexibility in their work schedule, and reclaim significant time that would have been wasted on the daily commute. There has been a growing interest among many individuals in the advantages of freelancing work, as consciousness regarding one's rights at work increases. Furthermore, students who successfully complete freelancing projects enhance their qualifications for university tuition abroad by adding these projects to their repertoire of skills. As a result, freelancing has gained significant traction among undergraduates in Bangladesh.

Since Bangladesh has entered a new era of technology and many steps have been taken to make the country more digital, it is very important to find technology areas that can help people who are unemployed and the economy that isn't moving forward. Freelancing has been around for a short time in Bangladesh. Since the beginning of this decade, this job has become a lot more famous. The first freelance platform, "GURU," now known as SOFT moonlighter.com, began in 1998, but it only became famous after years of running. As time goes on and globalization changes quickly, the chances of freelancing have grown a lot in growing countries like Bangladesh. In the past few years, many online job markets have sprung up, letting freelancers



all over the world sell their skills to a wide range of clients (Horton, 2010). Nowadays, freelancing has become a popular employment option in Bangladesh, appealing to individuals who are looking for alternative ways to make a living.

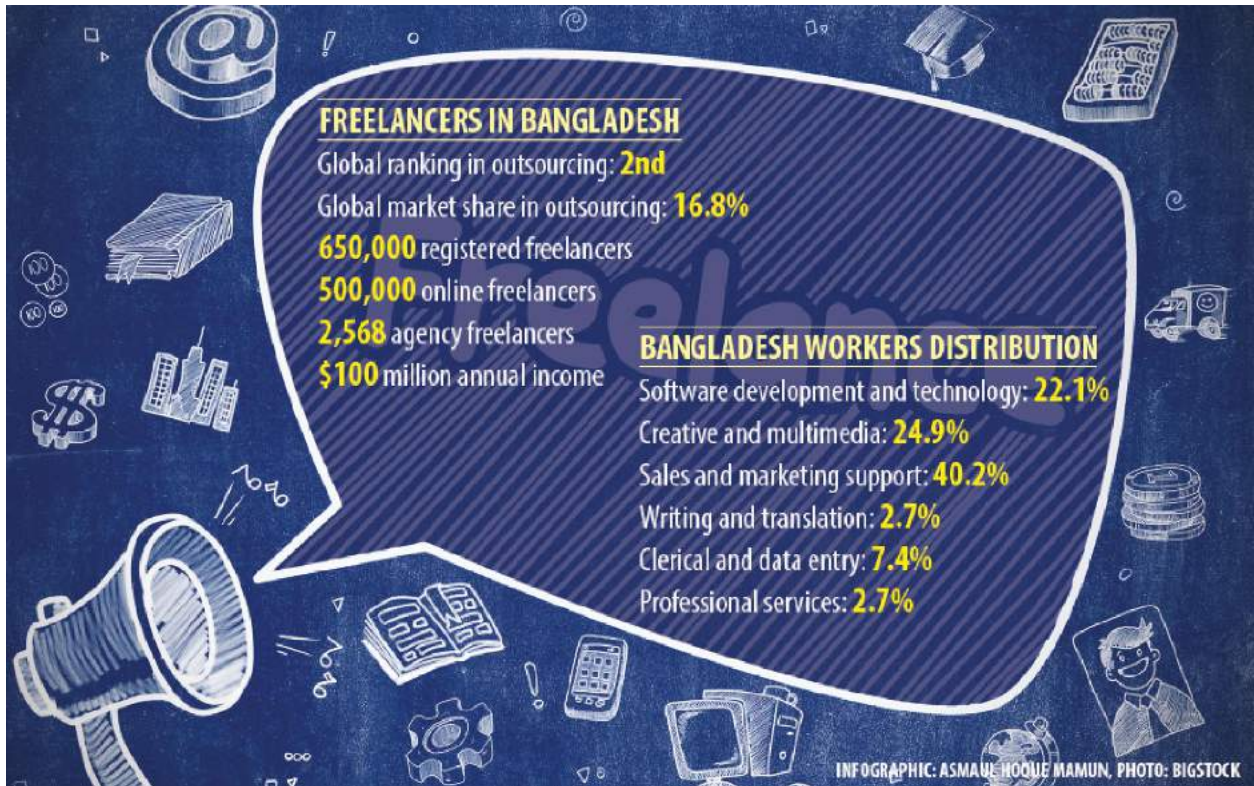


Figure 2.3: *Freelancers contribution and distribution in Bangladesh*

(Source: Dhaka tribune, 20th September 2017)

Factors contributing to this growth include increased internet penetration, the availability of skilled workers, and a supportive government approach toward promoting freelancing as a viable career option. The primary factor is the uncertainty in the local job market. There aren't enough jobs for educated young people in the market, and the growing youthful population is dissatisfied with the lack of opportunity, nepotism, and favoritism in the sometimes overcrowded professional sector. Also, local businesses rarely treat their employees with respect; underpayment and overworking are regular occurrences among many job holders in the market. Lack of flexibility in working hours and time-consuming traffic are further issues inhibiting



young people from entering the local labor market. Working as a freelancer allows a person to earn decent money while working less, have much more work flexibility, and save a significant amount of valuable time that would otherwise be squandered during the daily commute.

2.4 Present Freelancing Workforce in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's highly potential freelancing sector has hit a snag as lack of training and proper skill coupled with payment issues are hindering the industry from thriving. Freelancing started just a decade ago in Bangladesh. But even now, freelancing is not considered to be a proper job. The ICT Division puts the number of freelancers in Bangladesh at 6,50,000 and estimates the sector to be worth nearly \$1 billion. Freelancers earned \$100 million in 2018 and the figure more than doubled next year to \$220 million. Last year, the income shot up to \$500 million. Now it is \$1 billion. Freelancing is set to become a \$10 billion industry by 2026.

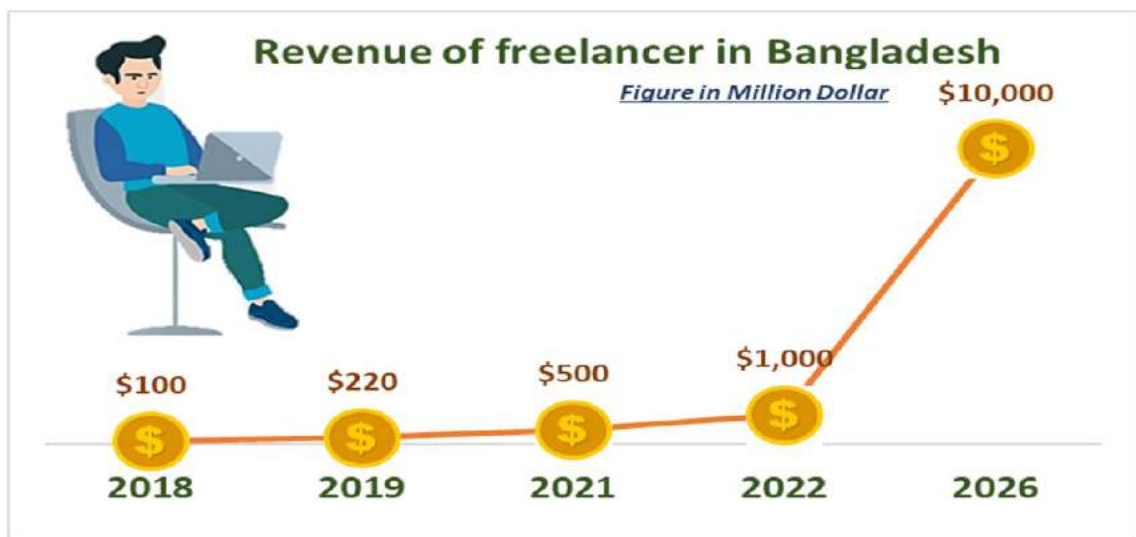


Figure 2.4: Revenue from freelancing in Bangladesh (figure in million dollar)

(Graph Design: Author's own creation , Data Source: The Business Post 28/07/21 and The Financial Express 23/10/23, Published on 25/02/2023)

The freelance workforce in Bangladesh has experienced substantial growth in recent years. According to the Bangladesh Freelancers Development Society (BFDS), the number of registered freelancers has increased by 25% annually over the past five years (BFDS, 2022). This surge can be

attributed to factors such as increasing internet penetration, a young and tech-savvy population, and the flexibility offered by freelance work.



Figure 2.5: *Growth of freelancing industry in Bangladesh*

(Source: *The Business Post*, Published on 28/07/2021)

A global survey in 2023 by Payoneer showed that the demand for freelance work has exhibited a high level of resilience despite concerns about an economic slowdown. A significant proportion of the respondents, approximately 46%, have reported an increase in demand, while 29% have indicated that there has been no change. 38% of the participants reported a surge in their hourly rates in the previous year, whereas only 15% observed a decline in their rates. Freelancers who utilise a combination of hourly and project-based fees tend to have a higher average rate compared to those who exclusively rely on one of these methods. In light of the escalating cost of living, a majority of freelancers, specifically 55%, have opted to increase their workload. Additionally, 41% of freelancers have raised their rates, while 32% have broadened their client

base to include new countries. According to LightCastle Partners (2020), at present, the IT and Information Technology Enabled Service (IT-ITES) sector within Bangladesh is assessed to be worth approximately USD 1.1 billion. In Bangladesh, the number of registered software and ITES companies exceeds 4500. 43% of the companies have a presence in both the domestic and international markets, with 48% focusing solely on the domestic market and 9% exclusively on the international market.

2.5 Government Initiatives for Freelancing Industry

Bangladesh's government has implemented multiple steps to bolster support for freelancers and online workers within the country. A noteworthy endeavor is the introduction of a Freelancer ID, a credential supported by the government that validates the income and professional standing of freelancers (Government of Bangladesh, 2023). The ICT sector in Bangladesh has grown by 40% annually since 2010 (UNCTAD, 2020). A new study from the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) (2017) said that Bangladesh was the second-largest source of online workers, with 16% of all roles filled. India is the biggest source, with 24% of all roles filled and there are about 650 thousand IT service exporters or freelancers in Bangladesh right now, and about 1,600 team-based freelancing organizations.

A report in a national daily in Bangladesh, referring to Zunaid Ahmed, the state minister for Information and Communication Technology (ICT), stated that the current number of freelancers in the country stands at 650,000 (Prothom Alo, 2023). It also added that freelancers' yearly revenue amounts to approximately Tk 106 billion, or USD 1 billion (exchanged at Tk 106 per dollar). He added that, since 2014, the 'Learning and Earning' (LEDP) initiative has provided diverse IT-related instruction to 53,000 young people. Chairperson of the Bangladesh Freelancer Development Society, clarified, however, that the 600,000 to 650,000 freelancers listed only pertain to the Upwork Marketplace. In total, Bangladeshis are employed in 153 marketplaces. When these are accounted for, the total will reach one billion. Roughly 55% of the population falls within the age range of 20 to 35 years. She added, however, that female participation in freelancing remains quite minimal. She also says, India tops the list when it comes to the number of freelancers. Bangladesh comes next in line. However, Bangladesh ranks seventh in terms of earning while USA tops the list. She added that 30,000 freelancers have been given smart cards till now starting from 2020. These cardholders will receive bank loan facilities. Even 4 per cent incentive is given if brought earned income from abroad through banks.



The government of Bangladesh has kept the earnings from freelancing as tax-free. According to an online report, “In the sixth schedule of the Income Tax Act, income from IT freelancing has been kept exempted for the period of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2024, along with 27 other types of digital services.” Software development, customization of software or applications, a nationwide telecommunication transmission network, graphic information service (GIS), website development, website services, web listing, IT process outsourcing, website hosting, digital graphics design, digital data entry and processing, and web process outsourcing are all examples of tax-exempt digital services. In addition to robotics process outsourcing, the offered services consist of software maintenance and IT support, software test lab services, call center services, medical transcription from abroad, search engine optimization services, document conversion, imaging and digital accomplishments, e-learning platform and e-book publication, system integration, and IT freelancing.

2.6 Profile and Expertise of Bangladeshi Freelancers

A study by Asian Institute of Research (2021) on IT-freelancing business in Bangladesh shows the social-demographic profile to pros and cons of conducting IT-freelancing operations. Here is the socio-demographic profile of freelancers of Bangladesh from the study:

Table 2.1: Socio-Demographic profile of freelancers of Bangladesh

Demographic Variables		Percentage
Age	Young (Less than 35)	96.2
	Adult (More than 35)	3.8
Gender	Male	92.3
	Female	7.7
Education Level	Up to Higher Secondary	11.5
	Higher Secondary	7.7
	Tertiary education	80.8
Language proficiency	Certified courses on English	38.5
	Certified on other language	1.9
	No language training	59.8
Residential status	Rural Area	13.5
	Urban Area	86.5



Monthly earnings	Up to BDT.25000	48.1
	BDT.25000-75000	35.6
	BDT.75000-200000	13.5
	More than BDT.200000	3.8

A significant number of people recently in our country have received training on Web Development and Design and Creative field while the other areas of training include Sales and Marketing, Data Science and Analytics, Mobile App & Software Development, Writing and Translation, Customer Service etc., though they represent a minor percentage.



Figure 2.6: Areas of Expertise of Bangladeshi Freelancers

(Source: Asian Institute of Research, 2021)

With the training received, majority of freelancers have gained expertise in Web Development, Design and Creative, and Sales and Marketing field. Furthermore, Writing and Translation and Software Development are the other mentionable areas of their expertise. The demand for specific freelance services has been influenced by global trends and technological advancements. Emerging fields like artificial intelligence, block-chain development, and e-commerce consultancy are gaining traction in the international market. Bangladeshi freelancers, particularly those with expertise in these domains, stand to benefit from this demand surge (World Economic Forum, 2021).

2.7 Scope of Career Path for Bangladeshi Freelancers

There are many different types of outsourcing jobs available in the marketplace. There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to deciding on a career path. Choosing a career path is as simple as deciding on something one is skilled at or something one enjoy doing. There are numerous work options available today. Graphic design is a good option. In addition to Drupal and Joomla, WordPress is an excellent platform for building a website or blog. It's free and open-source. WordPress makes it easy for anyone to create a dynamic website or blog. Joomla, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and PHP can also be used to create a dynamic website. Another option to get money online is through data entry and data analysis. In the job market, there are several opportunities for data entry and data analysis workers. It's quite simple, and one don't need any prior programming knowledge or expertise to complete it. Another great approach to make money online is by producing articles or other types of material. One can build a career out of writing high-quality material. There are many various types of content writing, such as writing for a health blog or a technical website.

One of the best methods to make money is through affiliate marketing, which involves selling things from other companies. Affiliate marketing is now being used by a large number of Bangladeshis. If one want to profit from this market, he needs to create a specialist site where customers can evaluate and compare different types of products. There is no doubt that Bangladeshis can establish an outsourcing business with any of the processes outlined above and earn millions of dollars in foreign cash. It is quite easy to start a business like this in Bangladesh because of the government's support. As a result, freelancers can obtain a wide range of services through the Bangladesh Ministry of Information and Technology's start-up outsourcing business. Doing Social Media Marketing can also help one to make money.

According to Asian Institute of Research (2021), the common mistakes committed by the freelancers while applying for jobs include-

- Applying for wrong job
- Inaccurate application format
- Failing to meet deadline
- Plagiarism
- Having multiple accounts
- Inability in work portfolio design
- Not knowing how to pitch



- Accepting whatever job that are available without having proper skills
- Lack of professionalism
- Furnishing false information about skills and expertise
- Having insufficient knowledge about marketplace
- Unable to understand the job details and client demands
- Weak communication skills
- Putting less importance to client reviews

2.8. Market Place and Market Volume of the freelancing industry in Bangladesh

In recent years, the global freelancing market had been experiencing rapid growth. However, specific market volumes tend to fluctuate due to various factors such as economic conditions, technological advancements, and shifts in workforce preferences. According to several reports and industry analyses up until 2022, the global freelance market was estimated to be worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Platforms like Upwork, Freelancer, Fiverr, and others contributed significantly to this market. It's important to note that these figures encompass various freelance sectors, including but not limited to IT, design, writing, marketing, and administrative support.

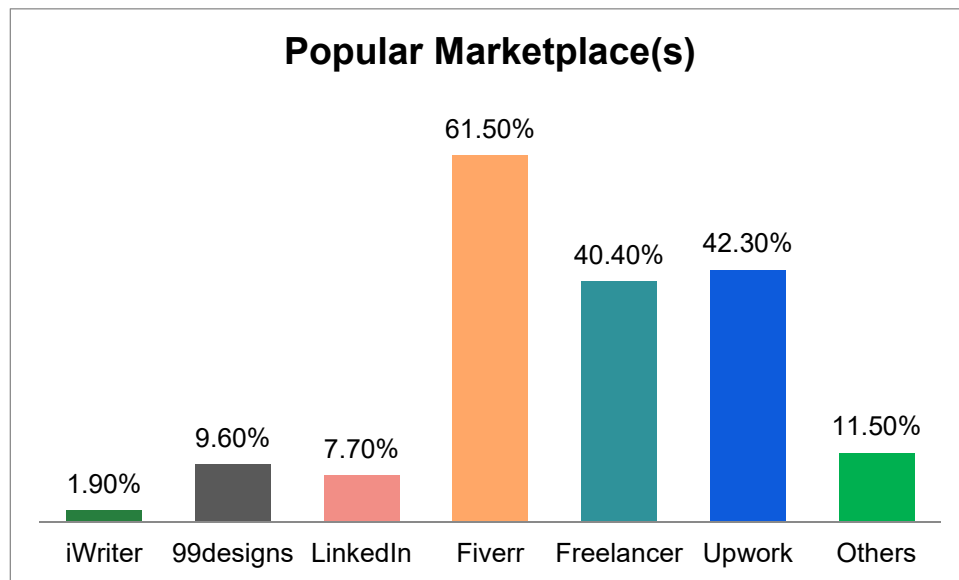


Figure 2.7: Preferred Market Place for Bangladeshi Freelancers

(Source: Asian Institute of Research, 2021)

The exact market volume for freelancing in Bangladesh may not have been readily available or separately quantified within the global figures due to the diverse nature of freelance work and the integration of Bangladeshi freelancers into international platforms. However, Bangladesh has been recognized as one of the countries with a rapidly growing number of freelancers contributing to the global marketplace.

Globally popular marketplaces like Fiverr, Upwork, Freelancer are also mostly preferred by the Bangladeshi freelancers with fewer working in the platforms such as 99designs, LinkedIn, People Per Hour. Bangladesh has experienced significant growth in its freelance workforce, especially in fields such as IT, graphic design, content creation, and digital marketing. Platforms like Upwork, Fiverr, Freelancer, and others have seen increased participation from Bangladeshi freelancers. While there might not have been precise figures available for the overall market volume of freelancing in Bangladesh, the country has been recognized as having a substantial number of freelancers contributing to the global marketplace.

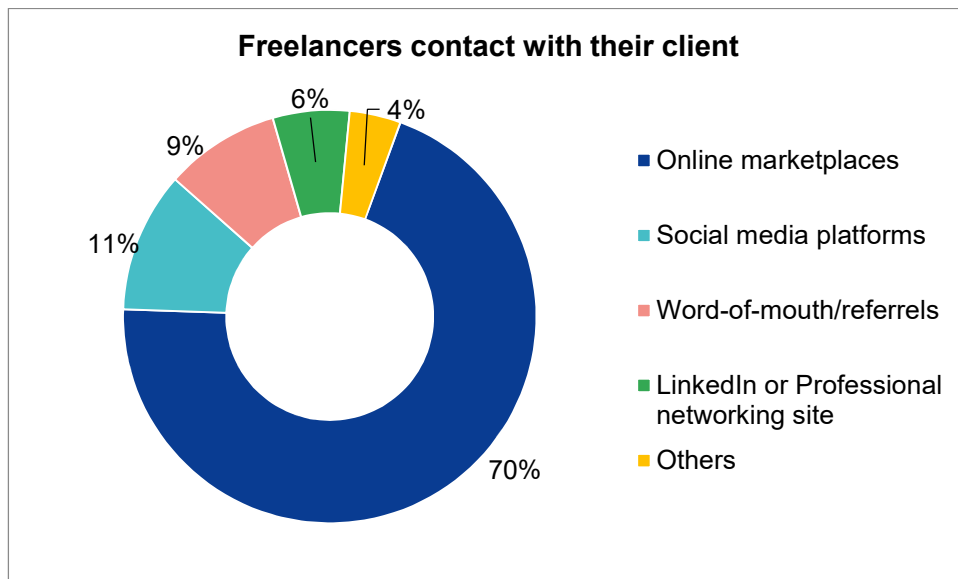


Figure 2.8: How freelancers contact with their clients

(Source: A Pioneer Survey in 2023)

Freelancers have identified online marketplace as their biggest channel of getting job. Besides, they also get jobs through Customer to Customer, Client to Customer channels and Company



Websites. On the other hand, Government Sources have been identified as a very insignificant source from where a very fewer number of jobs has been channeled to them.

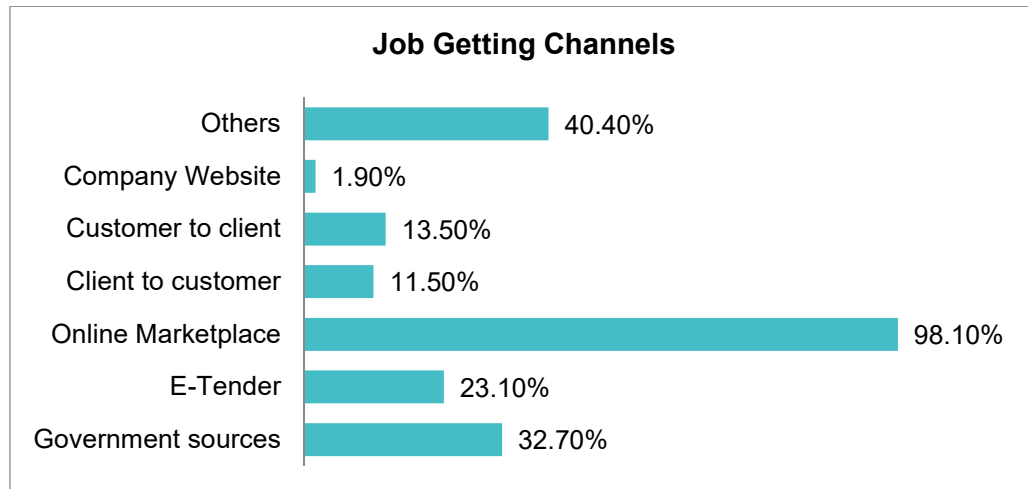


Figure 2.9: Job getting channels in different market places
 (Source: A Pioneer Survey in 2023)

Promotional activities are important for the freelancers for improving themselves and get rating, so that they have got selected for higher proficiency work. For the majority of the freelancers, their promotional activity includes Rating from marketplace, posts on forum and social media, Website and others.

2.9. Payment Systems

Payment method and its related issues are important for a freelancer. The rules and regulations of payment systems vary country to country and work to work. Most of the freelancers prefer US Dollar as currency of payment with a very small number favoring for the local currency Taka. Most of the respondent freelancers prefer Payoneer, Paypal, Mastercard, and Skrill as their payment gateway. Also, a marginal portion of them use other gateways as Visa, Western Union, and American Express etc. Priyo Pay, a Bangladeshi fintech company, is set to be launched, promising to transfer foreign currency earnings to freelancers' local bank accounts within five minutes.



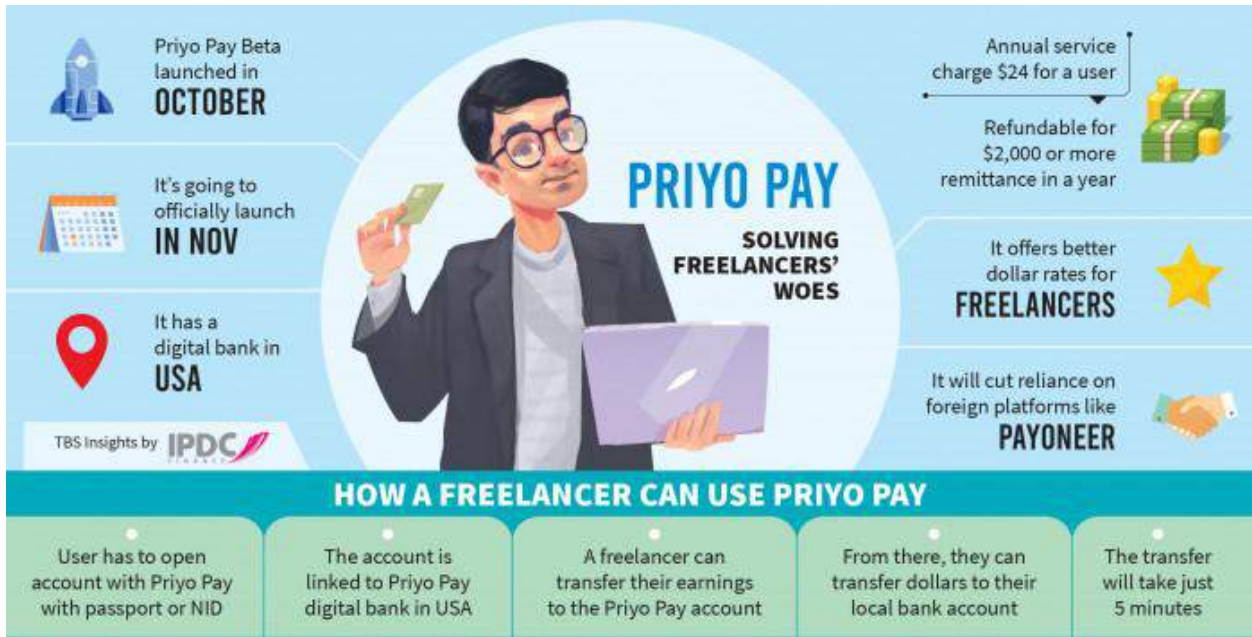


Figure 2.10: *Payment related issues*
 (Data Source: *The Business Standard*, Published on 06/11/2021)

2.10 Impact of Freelancing on Economy

2.10.1 Employment Generation

Bangladesh has already begun to establish itself as one of the major players in the global outsourcing services market, and the start of the Covid-19 outbreak has only served to accelerate this rise. Bangladesh's economy, like many others throughout the world, has experienced a slowdown in growth, which has caused many individuals to lose their sources of income. Many people saw a decrease in their income as well, and as a result of losing their jobs or seeing their income decline, many young, educated people turned to freelancing as a way to make ends meet. Bangladesh, according to a recent study by the Oxford Internet Institute (OII), has come up as the second-largest supplier of online laborers with a labor share of 16 per cent, trailing only India which has a 24 per cent labor share. Currently, Bangladesh has around 650 thousand IT service exporters or freelancers, with roughly 1,600 team-based freelancing organizations.

IT freelance work has significantly increased in Bangladesh; their income is not included in the software export data, therefore it is difficult to estimate how much money they bring in from outside each year. Some nations have already established themselves as leaders in the global

outsourcing market. Bangladesh cannot be considered a crawler in this group of countries. Bangladesh, meanwhile, has a strong track record and has already established itself as a serious competitor. With 160 million inhabitants, this little South Asian country is becoming a popular destination for IT and ITES outsourcing. The fact that Bangladesh is competing with India, Pakistan, and certain Eastern European countries for freelance work speaks much about the quality of Bangladeshi IT experts.

2.10.2 Poverty Reduction

Freelancing has played a role in mitigating poverty in Bangladesh by offering opportunities for individuals to generate income and improve their livelihoods. Here are some ways in which freelancing contributes to poverty reduction:

2.10.2.1. Income Generation

Freelancing allows individuals, especially those with marketable skills in areas like IT, design, writing, and digital marketing, to earn income independently. This additional income can help lift individuals and their families out of poverty by providing a stable source of earnings.

2.10.2.2. Accessibility and Flexibility

Freelancing offers flexibility in work hours and location, making it accessible to a wide range of people, including those who may face barriers to traditional employment due to location, physical disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, or lack of formal education. This accessibility creates opportunities for marginalized communities to engage in income-generating activities.

2.10.2.3. Empowerment and Entrepreneurship

Freelancing empowers individuals to become entrepreneurs in their own right. It encourages self-reliance, initiative, and the development of business skills, enabling individuals to create their own opportunities for income generation.



2.10.2.4. Rural Development

Freelancing allows individuals residing in rural areas of Bangladesh to access global job markets without needing to relocate. This helps in distributing economic opportunities beyond urban centers, contributing to rural development and reducing urban-rural income disparities.

2.10.2.5. Skill Development and Education

Engaging in freelancing often requires individuals to continuously develop their skills to remain competitive. As individuals seek to enhance their skills, they may invest in education and training, thereby increasing their employability and potential to earn higher incomes.

2.10.2.6. Contribution to National Economy

The earnings generated by freelancers contribute to the national economy through foreign currency inflow, which can positively impact the country's overall economic health and potentially support poverty alleviation programs and infrastructure development.

However, while freelancing can be a viable means to reduce poverty, it's essential to address challenges such as internet access, digital literacy, access to financial services, and market fluctuations. Additionally, support from the government and relevant institutions in providing training, infrastructure, and access to international markets can further enhance the impact of freelancing on poverty reduction in Bangladesh.

2.11 Impact of Freelancing on Society

Many freelancers had to face taunts like, -- "doesn't sleep at night," "spends whole day on computers," "who knows what he does," "this isn't a job or anything permanent," "no girl will marry him." etc. Although freelancers get more social recognition now, there's a long way ahead. The creation of jobs also matters most for a country whose unemployment is huge and where new entrants to the employment market every year is substantial. Employment growth rates in the economy have, thus, been disappointing even in the scenario of a relatively high growth rate of its output during the last one decade or more. This unexpectedly high unemployment rate opens the door of huge potential of freelance outsourcing for Bangladesh.



2.11.1. Youth

Freelancing has emerged as a viable career option for the youth in Bangladesh, offering them opportunities for employment, skill development, entrepreneurship, and global exposure. However, challenges such as access to reliable internet, payment processing, and skill gaps need to be addressed to ensure the sustainable growth and success of youth engaged in freelancing in the country.

2.11.2. Women

Unfavorable working conditions, as well as a variety of societal difficulties, such as lack of family support and a lack of road safety, are among the most prominent causes of female unemployment in Bangladesh. For these reasons, women who work outside the home may find that their families are unwilling to assist them. In Bangladesh, the topic of gender discrimination is a major one. For the same amount of effort, women are frequently paid less than their male counterparts. This can be done by increasing the number of women working as freelancers in Bangladesh. For women in Bangladesh, an outsourcing or freelancing profession can be a terrific option. They will be able to take care of their families while also advancing their careers in this manner.

2.12 Challenges of freelancing in Bangladesh

We need to surmount only a few challenges to be recognized as one of the Giants in freelancing industry. Bangladesh possesses the capacity to emerge as a major contender within the freelancing sector. Bangladesh was assigned a "poor" rating by Gartner in three critical domains: intellectual property security, language proficiency and data management, and infrastructure. The most immediate obstacles to freelancing are inadequate infrastructure, such as recurrent power outages and sluggish, unreliable Internet connections.

A Power Drift

Businesses in Bangladesh have been afflicted by inadequate power for an extended period. It presents a challenge not only for freelancing enterprises but also for non-manufacturing and manufacturing businesses of various categories.



Internet Speed Deficit

While the Internet may be a familiar concept to many parts of the globe, it is still in its infancy in our nation. We are still considerably further behind the rest of the globe. Despite the presence of two submarine Internet cables, our nation still lacks a connection that is free from disruptions.

Money Transaction Difficulty

The payment method is a significant obstacle in the freelancing industry. Working individuals are present in every region of the globe. Freelancing and outsourcing are not dissimilar to the aforementioned. However, we tend to cling to our antiquated conventional method of payment. It is either currency or a check. Numerous businesses pay their employees through salary accounts at various banks at present. However, security in payment methods is the most critical factor for employees. Presently, freelancers are compensated through their individual bank accounts, which ensures security. However, another method of payment besides "Paypal" is available. However, currently, the government of Bangladesh prohibits online transactions. Without any ambiguity, web-based enterprises in Bangladesh have identified this as the most significant challenge they encounter. Almost all the respondents experience this difficulty when conducting business internationally. The most troublesome aspect of operating a freelance business, as cited by most companies, is international financial transactions.

Infrastructure Crisis

When an industry requires expansion, infrastructure support is vital. Government and private organizations ought to contribute concurrently in order to sustain an industry's growth rate. Bangladesh's IT outsourcing industry is still in its infancy. Infrastructure development is critical for its maturation, as evidenced by the six critical topics identified in a survey pertaining to the IT freelancing industry.

Empowerment in Marketing and English Proficiency

Despite holding a prominent position in the freelancing market, our inability to achieve the highest level is solely attributable to our limited understanding of marketing. Therefore, it is imperative that our personnel also gain an understanding of the intricacies of marketing, as this technical expertise will prove beneficial in their professional endeavors involving communication. Although we possess a considerable workforce, a considerable number of individuals lack proficiency in the English language.



Rights to intellectual property

The preservation of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and the assurance of security for such assets should be rigorously enforced government regulations, given the prevailing high risk of fraud and piracy that threatens every industry. Numerous incidents of software piracy have contributed to Bangladesh's continued negative reputation. The government should address this immediately in accordance with IT acts and regulations.



Chapter Three

Impact Assessment of LEDP: Quantitative Perspective

3.1 Age and Gender of the Participants

Out of 600 respondents, more than 50% (309 respondents) of them are in age group 23-26 who had participated in training of LEDP. Again, 26% respondents (156 respondents) are in age group 27-30. Besides, there is only 5% (30 respondents) of them are above 34 years. So it can be concluded that youths are more likely to attend this type of programme. Out of 600 participants, 325 (about 55%) are males and other 275 (about 45%) participants are female.

Figure 3.1 : Age group of the Respondents

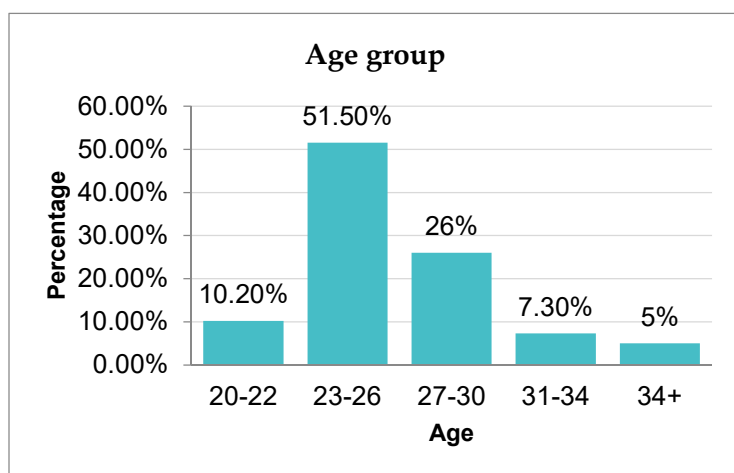


Table 3.1 :Age group of the Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
20-22	61	10.2
23-26	309	51.5
27-30	156	26.0
31-34	44	7.3
34+	30	5.0
Total	600	100.0

Figure 3.2 : Gender of the Respondents

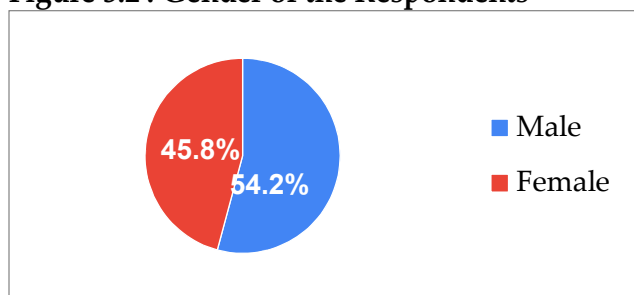


Table 3.2 : Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	325	54.2
Female	275	45.8
Total	600	100.0



3.2 Education, Occupation and Residence of the Participants

Out of 600 respondents, most of them (385 respondents) are graduates or about to end of their graduation and it is 64.2% and 23.5% (141 respondents) are post-graduates. Educational qualification for rest of the (12.2%) respondents is HSC pass. Although the required qualification for participating in LEDP training was HSC but nearly two-third of the participants were graduate. Hence recent graduates are more likely to participate in these courses, this is due to the unemployment problem among the graduates.

Figure 3.3 : Educational qualification of respondents

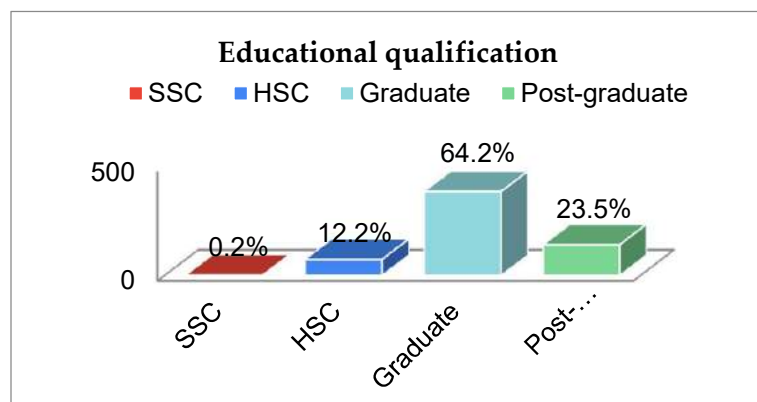


Table 3.3 : Educational qualification of respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent
SSC	1	.2
HSC	73	12.2
Graduate	385	64.2
Post-graduate	141	23.5
Total	600	100.0

The current employment status of the respondents reveals that 40.3% (242 out of 600 respondents) are unemployed, 39.5% are employed and 20.2% are freelancers. This survey has done after about 2 years of the completing the training of LEDP. In this mean time we find that a significant number of respondents have been employed in different institutions and one-fifth started freelancing after completing course. But about 40% is still unemployed even after receiving training, there is scope to do something for them. If LEDP project is extended in the 2nd Phase, LEDP may take some initiatives for these trained unemployed youths, such initiatives will increase the sustainability of the programme.

Figure 3.4 : Employment status of respondents

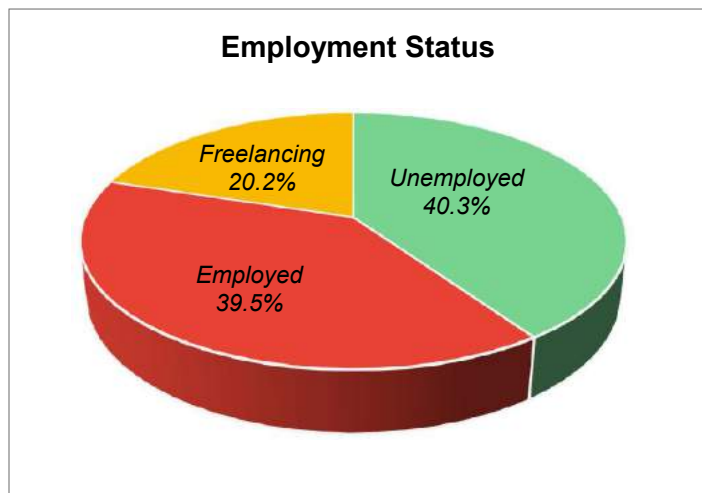


Table 3.4 : Employment status of respondents

Employment status	Frequency	Percent
Unemployed	242	40.3
Employed	237	39.5
Freelancing	121	20.2
Total	600	100.0

Most of the respondents are from city area and it is about three-fourth (74.7%) of the total respondents of this survey. Besides, only 25.3% respondents (152 respondents out of 600) are from rural area. The finding depicts that people living in city or town area are more interested to take the freelancing training courses, this is due to the fact that most of the rural youths are still in dark about freelancing profession.

Figure 3.5 : Living area of respondents

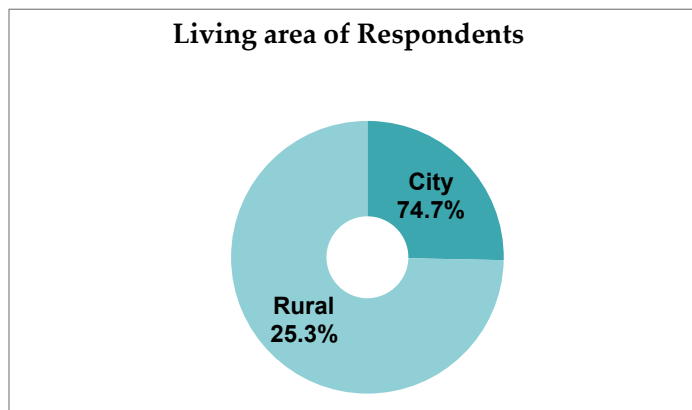


Table 3.5 : Living area of Respondents

Living Area	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	152	25.3
City	448	74.7
Total	600	100.0



3.3 Knowledge and Motivation for Participation in LEDP Training

Most of the respondents first learned about the Learning & Earning Development programme through social media and from their friends and it is 44.5% and 37.8% respectively. Rest of them learned about it through internet. This finding reveals that at present time social media is the strongest platform for exposure to initiatives like LEDP.

Figure 3.6 : Source of Knowledge about LEDP

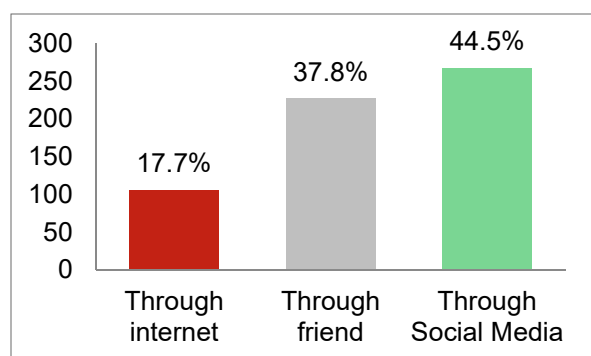


Table 3.6 : Source of Knowledge about LEDP

Source of Knowledge	Frequency	Percent
Through Internet	106	17.7
Through friend	227	37.8
Through social media	267	44.5
Total	600	100.0

About half of the participants were motivated to take part in the training of LEDP to create earning opportunity for future. On the other hand about one-third of participants (34.3%) were motivated to develop their own skills through learning these courses. Only 15.5% participants were motivated by someone else to take part in the training.

Figure 3.7 : Motivation for Participation in LEDP

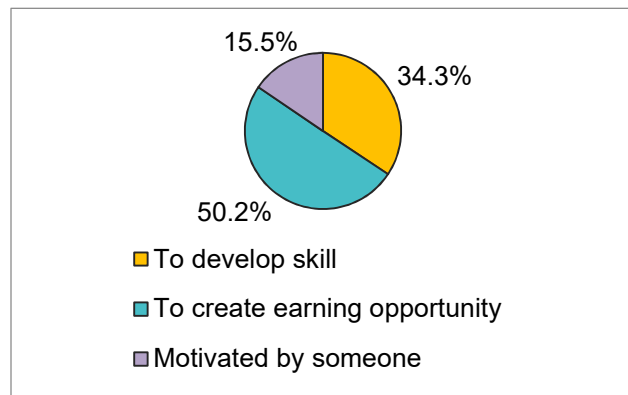


Table 3.7 : Motivation for Participation in LEDP

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
To develop skill	206	34.3
To create earning opportunity	301	50.2
Motivated by someone	93	15.5
Total	600	100.0



The survey finding depicts that 65.2% participants in this survey had no previous experience of similar training before participating in this training programme under LEDP. On the other hand, rest 34.8% participants had previous experience of similar training.

Figure 3.8 : Previous experience of similar training

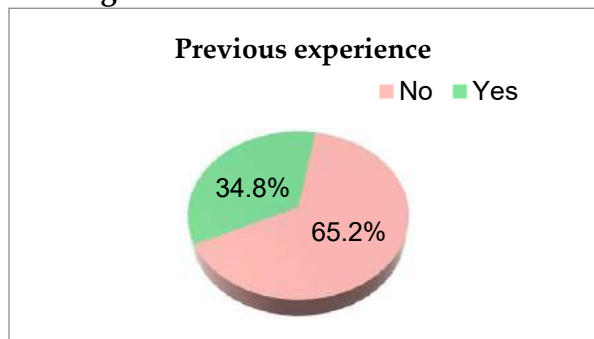


Table 3.8 : Previous experience of similar training

Previous experience	Frequency	Percent
No	391	65.2
Yes	209	34.8
Total	600	100.0

3.4 Evaluation of Skill Development through Participation in LEDP

The result shows that LEDP offered the development of the participant's English communication skill in 63.2% cases. Other 36.8% respondents of the survey did not agree with this. It is mentionable that LEDP offered training on technical subjects, there was no language training, but since the training was offered in English it helped the participants in developing their English skill.

Figure 3.9 : Developing English Skill

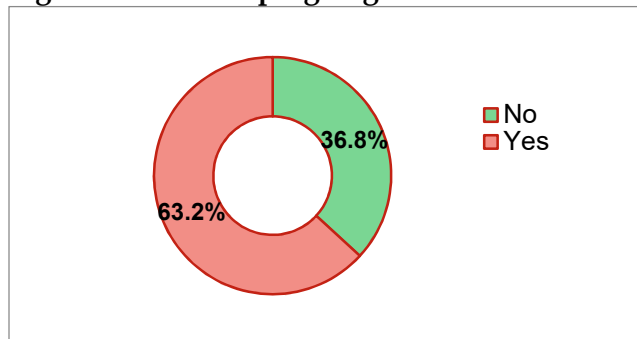


Table 3.9 : Developing English Skill

English Communicative skill offered	Frequency	Percent
No	221	36.8
Yes	379	63.2
Total	600	100.0



About 93% (560 out of 600) of the respondents think that the training they received created excellent opportunity for self-employment. That is the training provided by LEDP has enhanced their skill enough to eradicate their unemployment, that is almost all of the respondents find the opportunity of self-development through the courses.

Figure 3.10 : Training created skill for job

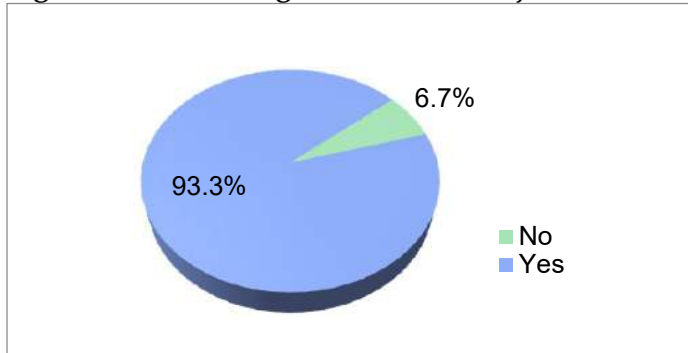


Table 3.10 : Training created skill for job

Employment opportunity	Frequency	Percentage
No	40	6.7
Yes	560	93.3
Total	600	100.0

About half of the participants of this survey (46.3%) think that the support and resources provided by the LEDP in helping their achievement in learning and earning goals are very good and 34% of them think the support and resources are good. A little number of participants (about 5%) think they are not that much good.

Figure 3.11 : Satisfaction on support and resources of LEDP

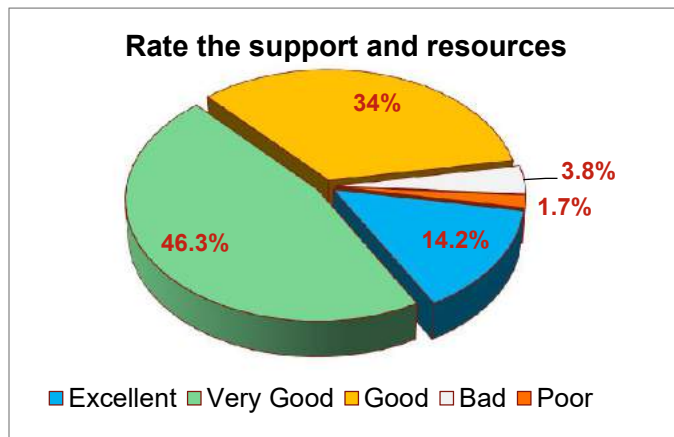


Table 3.11 : Satisfaction on support and resources of LEDP

Rate the resources	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	85	14.2
Very Good	278	46.3
Good	204	34.0
Bad	23	3.8
Poor	10	1.7
Total	600	100.0



3.5 Evaluation of Course Curriculum and Teaching Quality in LEDP

The study finding reveals that out of 3 courses, Graphic design and digital marketing are the most attractive two courses for the participants. 41.5% and 38.2% of the participants of the survey respectively voted for the courses and they also did these courses as training courses of LEDP, where 20.3% of participants were in favour of Web design and development.

Figure 3.12 : Most attractive course (%)

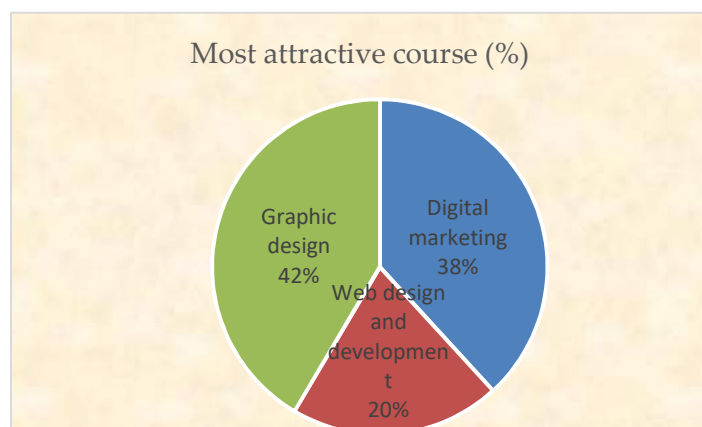


Table 3.12 : Most attractive course (%)

Most attractive course	Frequency	Percent
Digital marketing	229	38.2
Web design and development	122	20.3
Graphic design	249	41.5
Total	600	100.0

About 98% of the respondents found the course materials and resources provided in the class were helpful in their learning journey and after that. Only 2.2% respondents found the materials not that much useful.

Figure 3.13 : Usefulness of course materials (%)

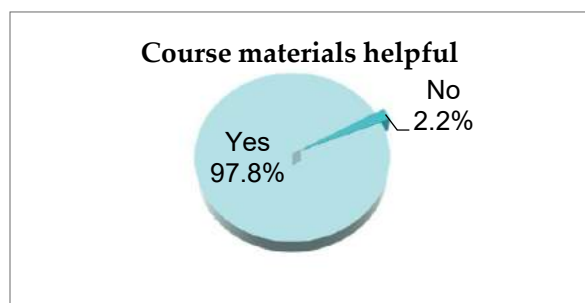


Table 3.13 : Usefulness of course materials (%)

Helpful course materials	Frequency	Percent
No	13	2.2
Yes	587	97.8
Total	600	100.0

It is found that most of the teachers are qualityful throughout the courses. Out of 600 respondents, 579 (about 96.5%) of them response positively about the quality of the course teachers where 28.5% respondents response as the teachers were excellent and about half (49.7%) of the respondents agreed that teachers were very good. Only 3.5% respondents rate the quality of teacher as bad or poor.

Figure 3.14 : Quality of teachers

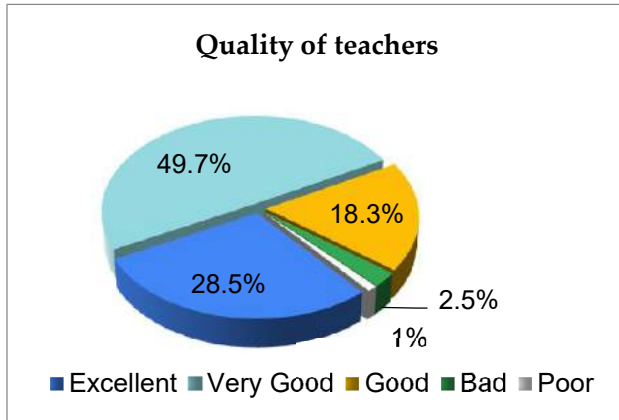


Table 3.14 : Quality of teachers

Quality of teachers	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	171	28.5
Very Good	298	49.7
Good	110	18.3
Bad	15	2.5
Poor	6	1.0
Total	600	100.0

The result shows that more than half (55%) of the respondents appreciated the teaching equipment quality as good, while nearly 40% appreciated the teaching quality as 'very good'. Very few of them (3%) said the equipment was excellent and insignificant numbers of them (2%) claimed that the teaching equipment was bad or poor.

Figure 3.15 : Quality of teaching equipment

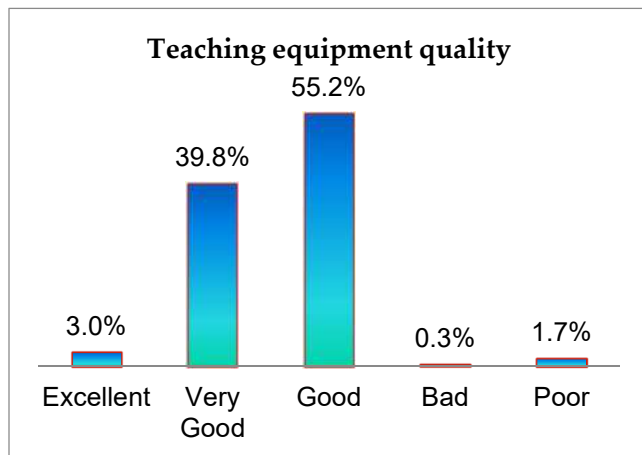


Table 3.15 : Quality of teaching equipment

Teaching equipment	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	18	3.0
Very Good	239	39.8
Good	331	55.2
Bad	2	.3
Poor	10	1.7
Total	600	100.0



More than 60% respondents were satisfied with the training, where another 5% respondents were very satisfied. Besides, 28.7% respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. But rest 4% (12) respondents were not satisfied with the training and they had complained with the teaching staff, teaching methods and system of management.

Figure 3.16 : Overall satisfaction on training

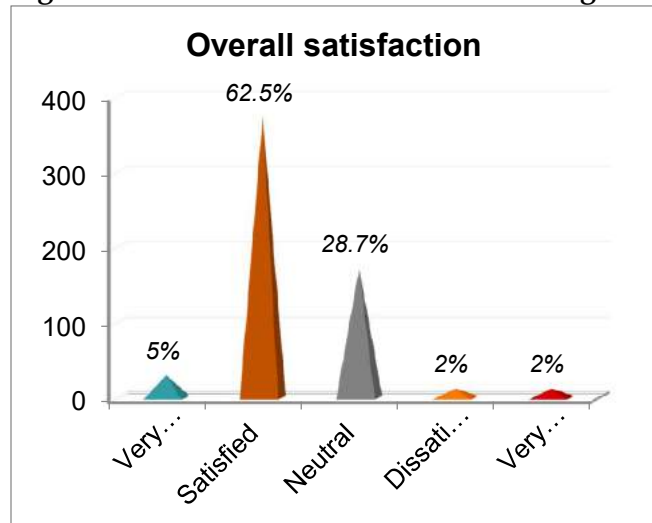


Table 3.16 : Overall satisfaction on training

Overall satisfaction	Frequency	Percent
Very satisfied	30	5.0
Satisfied	374	62.3
Neutral	172	28.7
Dissatisfied	12	2.0
Very dissatisfied	12	2.0
Total	600	100.0

In this survey, 98.2% of the respondents think that some advanced courses should be included with the other ongoing courses as a part of LEDP training. They recommended that data entry and analysis software SPSS and programming language should be included in the next phase of LEDP.

Figure 3.17 : Advanced courses should be included

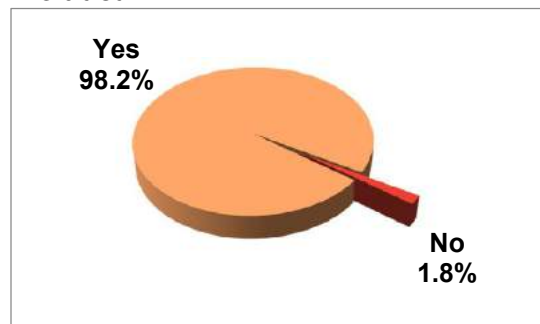


Table 3.17 : Advanced courses should be included

Advanced courses need to include	Frequency	Percent
No	11	1.8
Yes	589	98.2
Total	600	100.0



3.6 Affordability and adaptation for participating in LEDP

Out of 600 respondents, 459 (76.5%) respondents had a device like laptop or computer which were used in their training programme, but 141 (23.5%) of the total respondents did not have any laptop or computer before starting their training in LEDP.

Figure 3.18 : Having laptop/computer of own

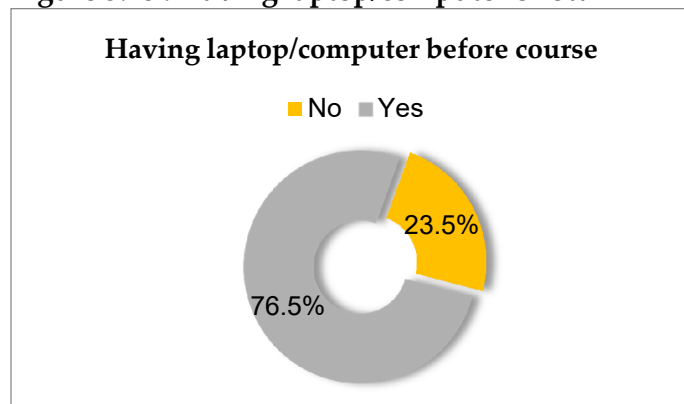


Table 3.18 : Having laptop/computer of own

Having laptop/computer	Frequency	Percent
No	141	23.5
Yes	459	76.5
Total	600	100.0

The respondents who did not have devices like laptops or computers before starting courses had to manage devices for training. Out of 141 this kind of respondents, 21.3% of them borrowed devices from someone, 8.5% of them purchased, 9.2% of them shared with other trainees and most of them (61%) managed devices in any other way.

Figure 3.19 : Managing lack of laptop/computer

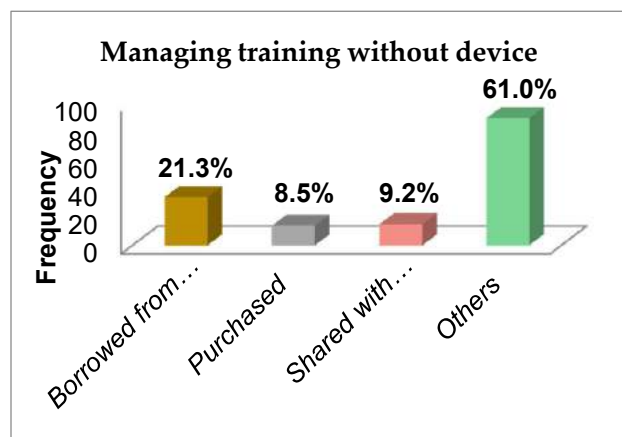


Table 3.19 : Managing lack of laptop/computer

Managing computer	Frequency	Percent
Borrowed from friend or relative	30	21.3
Purchased	12	8.5
Shared with other trainee	13	9.2
Others	86	61.0
Total	141	100.0

In this survey, out of 600 respondents, 86 of them were able to receive the laptop awarded as efficient trainee in their batches which is about 14.3% of the total respondents. But a some of respondents claim during interview that they were selected for laptop or had highest earnings, but did not get the laptop.

Figure 3.20 : Awarded laptop from LEDP

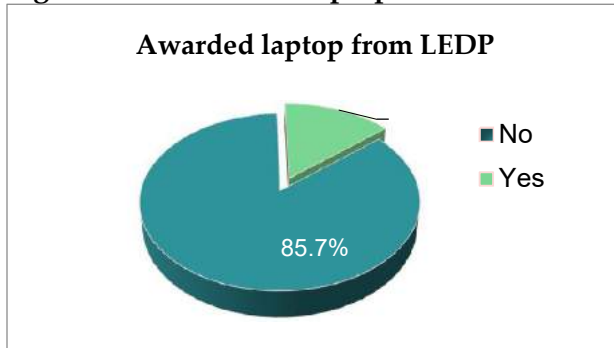


Table 3.20 : Awarded laptop from LEDP

Awarded laptop	Frequency	Percent
No	514	85.7
Yes	86	14.3
Total	600	100.0

Though the training course was offered free of cost, but there were some associated costs (like internet connection, managing computer etc.). About 65% (388 respondents out of 600) of the total respondents were able to afford the expenses of the courses while there rest about 35% of respondents (212 respondents) were not able to afford the expenses. That is for two-third of the respondents the cost was affordable.

Figure 3.21 : Affordability of training



Table 3.21 : Affordability of training

Course expense affordable	Frequency	Percent
No	212	35.3
Yes	388	64.7
Total	600	100.0

3.7 Improvement in job prospect due to training

More than 77% (which is more than three-fourth of total respondents; 465) of the respondents has responded positively that the courses they had done in LEDP have led them to improve their job prospects or career opportunities.

Figure 3.22 : Improvement in job prospect

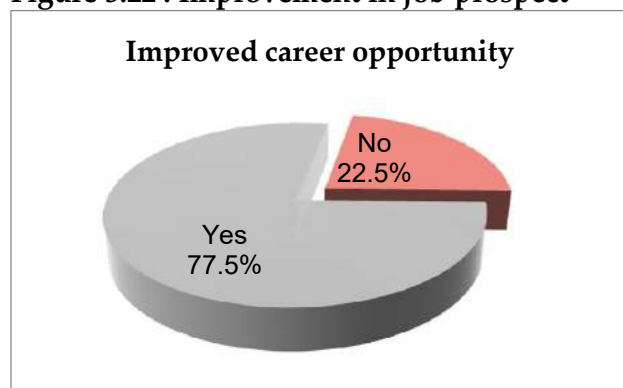


Table 3.22 : Improvement in job prospect

Improved career opportunity	Frequency	Percent
No	135	22.5
Yes	465	77.5
Total	600	100.0

A small proportion of the respondents have attended the job fair arranged by LEDP in their respective districts. Almost 91% of the students did not attend the district job fairs. The reason for not attending in job fair may be due to two reasons- firstly, lack of awareness and secondly, the fact that they want to be freelancer or self-employed.

Figure 3.23 : Attended job fair

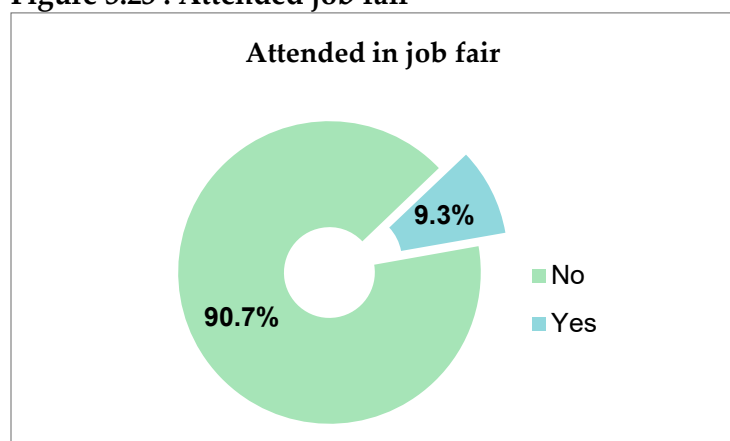


Table 3.23 : Attended job fair

Attend in fair or not	Frequency	Percent
No	544	90.7
Yes	56	9.3
Total	600	100.0

The study finding reveals that 346 (57.7%) participants from a total of 600 respondents experienced a change in their employment status after receiving the training. That is the training provided by LEDP proved effective in generating employment for more than half of the participants.

Figure 3.24 : Change in employment status

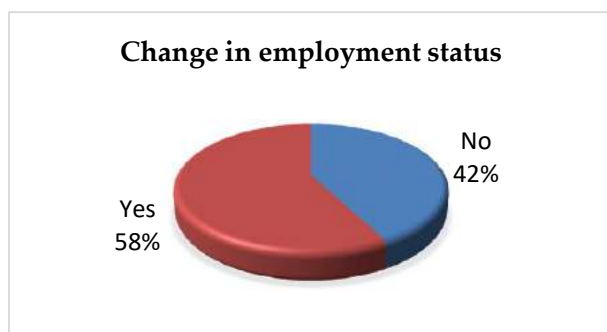


Table 3.24 : Change in employment status

Employment status Changes	Frequency	Percent
No	254	42.3
Yes	346	57.7
Total	600	100.0

3.8 Increase in income due to training

A total of 360 (60%) respondents have seen an increase in their earnings after the training because of the skills and knowledge they have gained from the training. On other hand, 40% have not experience like this as most of them have continued study still now and did not involve in income generating activities.

Figure 3.25 : Increase in earnings after training



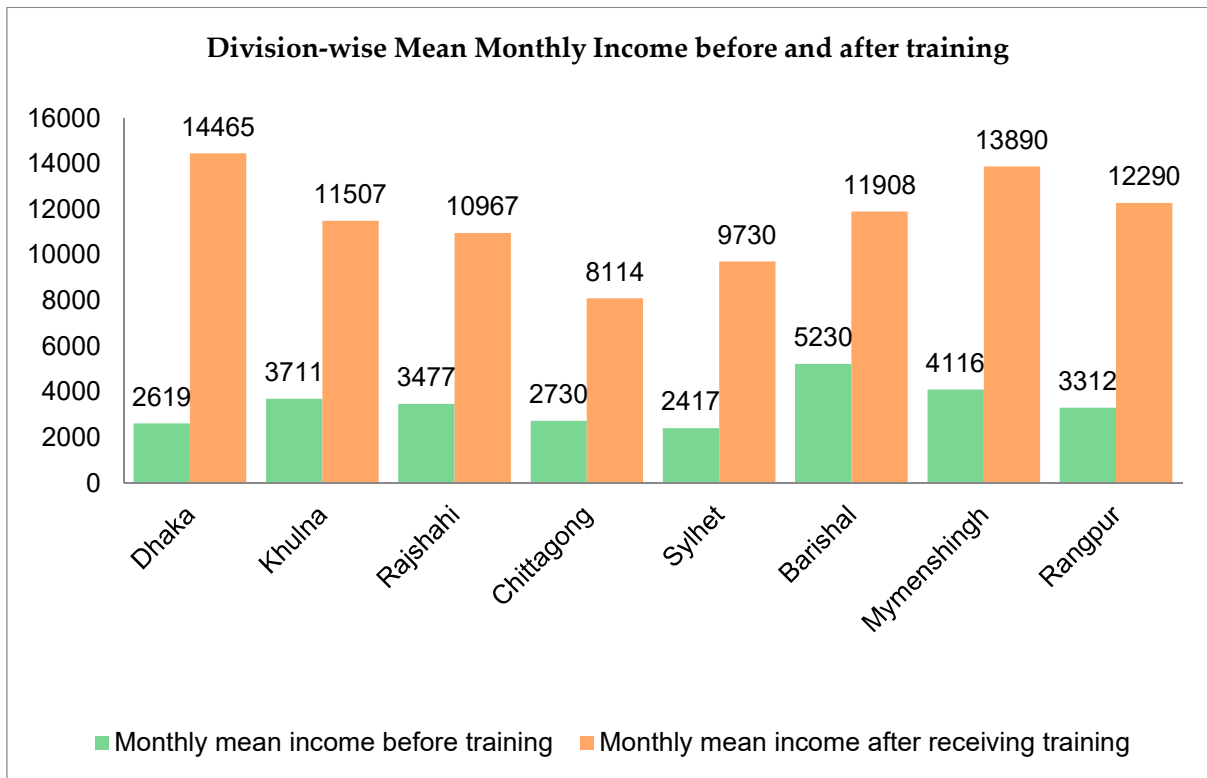
Table 3.25 : Increase in earnings after training

Increase in earnings	Frequency	Percent
No	240	40.0
Yes	360	60.0
Total	600	100.0



The study finding reveals that in every division the average monthly income of the respondents who attended training of LEDP has increased. The highest income increase observed in Dhaka division, in this division the monthly income of the freelancers increased more than five times after receiving training. This is due to the fact that as the capital city Dhaka has more employment opportunities and income friendly logistic supports. In other divisions income of the participants increased more than three times after receiving training. Thus it is evident that the training provided in LEDP is fruitful.

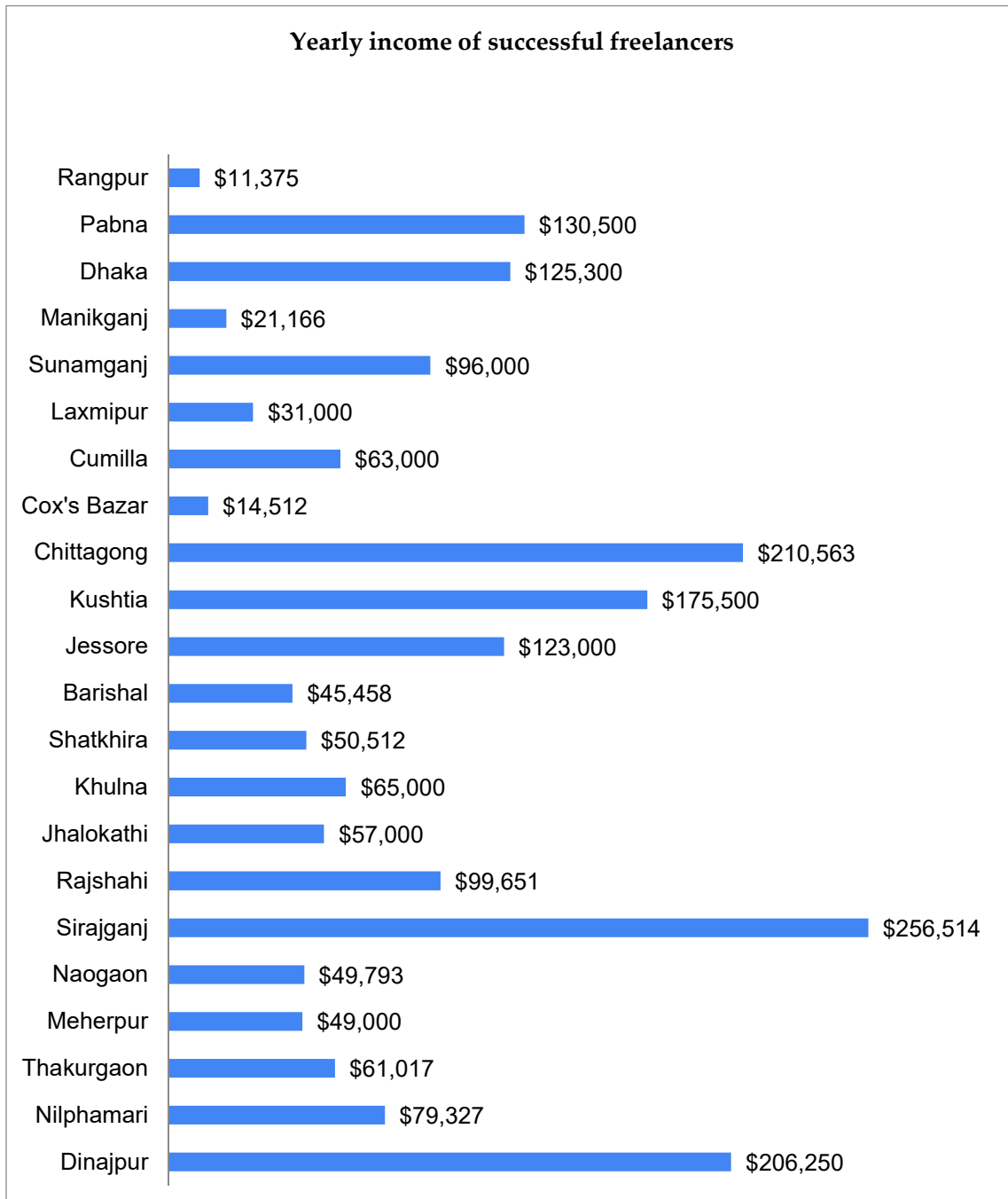
Figure 3.26 : Division-wise mean monthly income before and after receiving training



In order to evaluate the income of the successful freelancers, average yearly income of top 5 freelancers from each of the districts (where there is at least 5 successful freelancers) were calculated. It is observed that most of the successful freelancers having high income level are outside Dhaka. For instance the successful freelancers for Sirajgonj has the highest income level (\$ 256214 per year), successful freelancers of Chittagong has the second highest

income (\$ 210563 per year) and successful freelancers of Dinajpur has the third highest income (\$206,250 per year).

Figure 3.27 : Mean Yearly Income of top 5 freelancers by District (For selective districts).



3.9 Improvement in socio-economic condition after training

About 42% of the participants have had an improvement in their socio-economic status after receiving training from LEDP. On the other hand, 57.8% did not experience any improvement in their socio-economic status. As most of the respondents are still in learning stage, that's why they don't get the chance of socio-economic improvement till now. But in long run it is expected that rest of the trained participants will experience improvement in their socio-economic status.

Figure 3.28 : Improvement in socio-economic status after receiving training

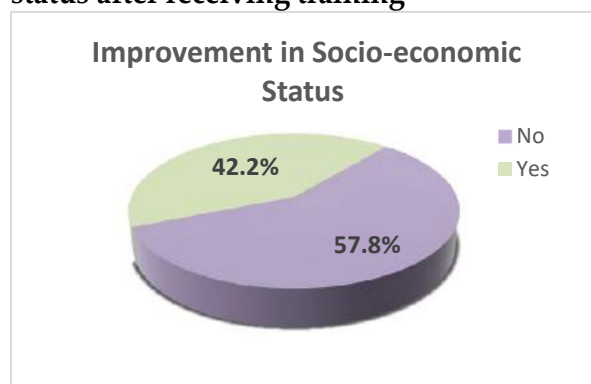


Table 3.26 : Improvement in socio-economic status after receiving training

Improvement in Socio-economic Status	Frequency	Percent
No	347	57.8
Yes	253	42.2
Total	600	100.0

Only 170(28.3%) out of 600 respondents could contribute to increase the educational opportunities for the family members (younger sister/brother). On the other hand, the majority (71.7%) could not contribute after having training in LEDP.

Figure 3.29 : Increase in educational opportunities

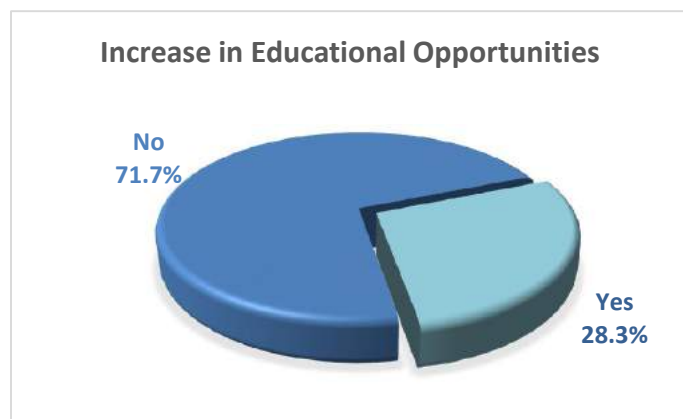


Table 3.27 : Increase in educational opportunities

Increase in educational opportunities	Frequency	Percent
No	430	71.7
Yes	170	28.3
Total	600	100.0

It is observed that 189 (31.5%) out of 600 respondents have experienced an increase in leisure, travel, and non-essential expenditures. On the other hand, most of the respondents (68.5%) did not experience an increase in leisure, travel, and other non-essential activities as a result of increasing their earning after LEDP training.

Figure 3.30 : Increase in non-essential expenditure

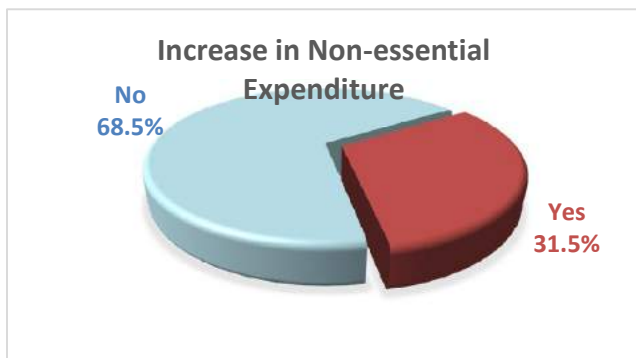


Table 3.28 : Increase in non-essential expenditure

Increase in non-essential expenditures	Frequency	Percent
No	411	68.5
Yes	189	31.5
Total	600	100.0

It was possible for 31.7% respondents to contribute in family's financial stability using the learning from LEDP. Most of the respondents (68%) did not contribute to their family's greater financial stability with their earnings. Though it looks like less people could have contribution to family, actually it is due to the fact that most of the respondents are still students and partially employed in other sectors.

Figure 3.31 : Contribution in family's financial stability

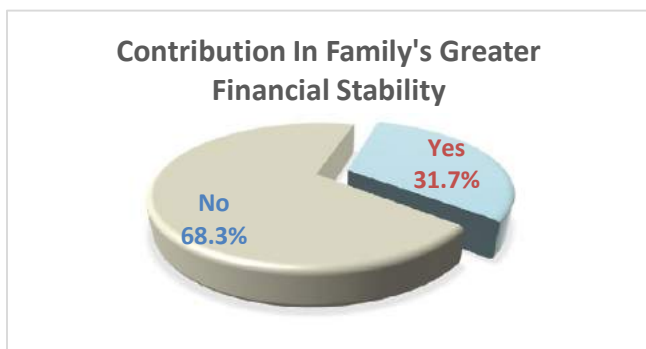


Table 3.29 : Contribution in family's financial stability

Contribution in financial stability	Frequency	Percent
No	410	68.3
Yes	190	31.7
Total	600	100.0

About 46% (279 out of 600) of respondents perceived their financial condition as good after receiving the training and 21.8% of respondents perceived it as fair which means their financial condition remained same. On the other hand, 25.7% of respondents perceived as poor whereas only 6% of respondents perceived their financial condition as excellent.

Figure 3.32 : Improvement in financial condition

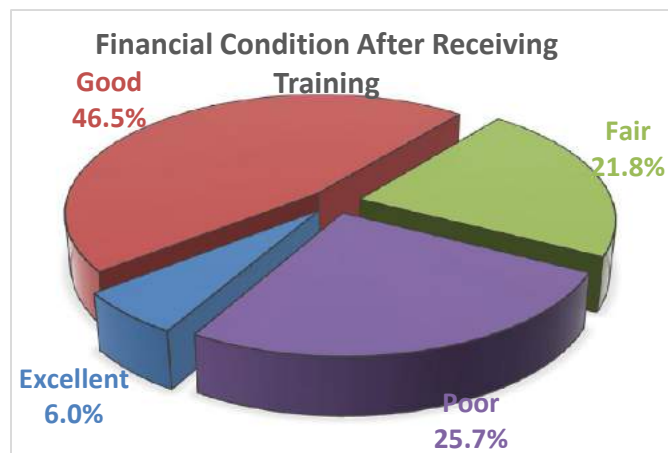


Table 3.30 : Improvement in financial condition

Financial Condition	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	36	6.0
Good	279	46.5
Fair	131	21.8
Poor	154	25.7
Total	600	100.0

3.10 Respondents' opinion about extension of LEDP

Almost all of the respondents (97.7%) think that there should be more opportunities like LEDP. Only 2.3% of the respondents think that more opportunities like LEDP should not be arranged. And most of them want to do this type of training again.

Figure 3.33 : Want more opportunities like LEDP

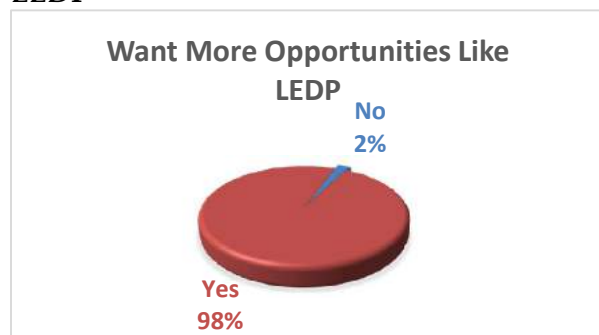


Table 3.31 : Want more opportunities like LEDP

Want More opportunities like LEDP	Frequency	Percent
No	14	2.3
Yes	586	97.7
Total	600	100.0



Study finding depicts that 95% of the respondents think that LEDP is helping the country to solve the unemployment problem. Only 5% of the respondents think otherwise. This 5% response as this programme should be arranged in more organized way to get more efficient result.

Figure 3.34 : LEDP helping the country to solve unemployment problem

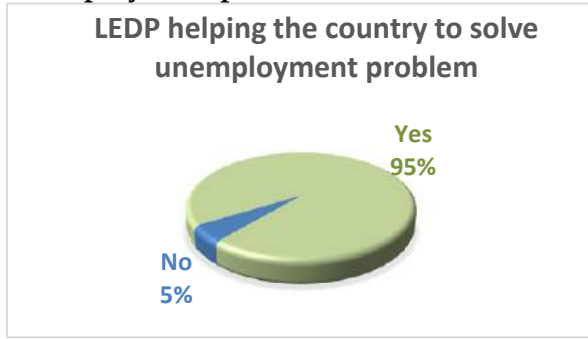


Table 3.34 : LEDP helping the country to solve unemployment problem

Able to solve unemployment problem	Frequency	Percent
No	30	5.0
Yes	570	95.0
Total	600	100.0

Most of the respondents (45.7%) perceive LEDP as a very good opportunity for youth. Around 27% of total respondents perceive it as an excellent opportunity for the youth and 27.3% perceive as a good opportunity. On the other hand, only 1 of the 600 students perceives LEDP as a bad opportunity.

Figure 3.35 : LEDP as an opportunity for youth



Table 3.33 : LEDP as an opportunity for youth

LEDP as an opportunity	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	161	26.8
Very Good	274	45.7
Good	164	27.3
Bad	1	0.2
Total	600	100.0



Almost all the respondents said that they would recommend the training to others. Only 1.8% respondents said that they would not recommend the training to others. So it can be said that, most of the respondents satisfy with the training and think this type of programme will be helpful for others.

Figure 3.36 : Recommending LEDP training to others



Figure 3.34 : Recommending LEDP training to others

Recommending others	Frequency	Percent
No	11	1.8
Yes	589	98.2
Total	600	100.0

Almost all the respondents recommended to renew the training in next phase. Whereas only 2.3% of the respondents did not recommend. Almost all the participants recommended to renew LEDP to 2nd phase since they have seen it beneficiary to the youth, family and the country.

Figure 3.37 : Recommend to renew LEDP in 2nd Phase



Table 3.35 : Recommend to renew LEDP in 2nd Phase

Recommend to renew LEDP	Frequency	Percent
No	14	2.3
Yes	586	97.7
Total	600	100.0

3.11 Respondents' recommendation for improvement of LEDP

Around 90% of the respondents suggested for increasing the number of trainees, since they think that it more unemployed youth should get the opportunity. On the other hand, 10% students did not suggest for increasing the number of trainees, rather they suggest for a single teacher for every course, so that the teacher can complete a course at the same pace.

Figure 3.38 : Recommend to increase number of trainees

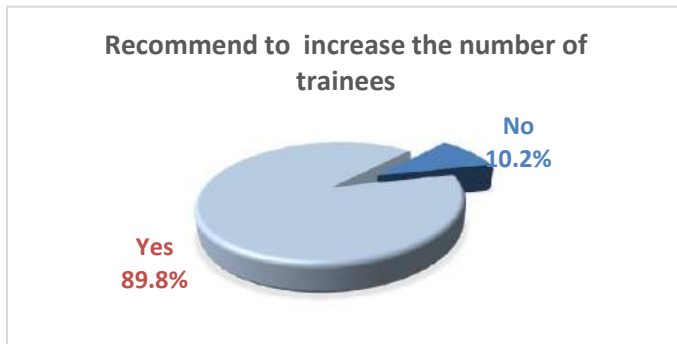


Table 3.36 : Recommend to increase number of trainees

Increase the number of trainees	Frequency	Percent
No	61	10.2
Yes	539	89.8
Total	600	100.0

Most of the respondents (74.2%) suggested a training of 3 or 4 months. Around 15% of the respondents suggested a training of 1-2 months and an 11% of the students suggested a training of 5 or more months.

Figure 3.39 : Suggested number of months for training

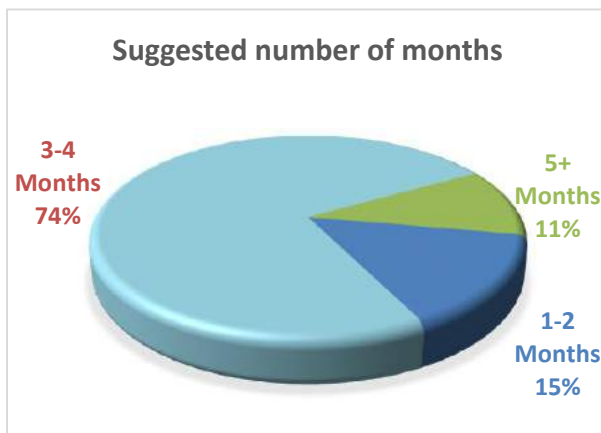


Table 3.37 : Suggested number of months for training

Suggested number of months	Frequency	Percent
1-2 Months	89	14.8
3-4 Months	445	74.2
5+ Months	66	11.0
Total	600	100.0



Among the respondents, 97% suggested for adding more courses in this training program, they suggested for including advanced courses like as data entry and analysis software SPSS, programming language etc. Rest 3% of respondents suggested for developing the ongoing courses rather than adding new courses.

Figure 3.40 : Suggestion to include advanced courses

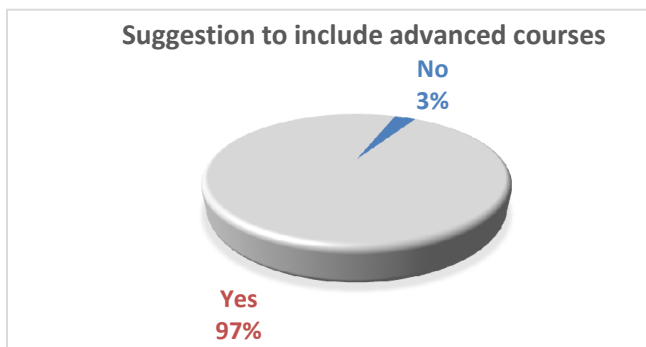


Table 3.38 : Suggestion to include advanced courses

Include advanced courses	Frequency	Percent
No	18	3.0
Yes	582	97.0
Total	600	100.0

Among the 600 respondents interviewed, 379 (63.2%) respondents stated that their preferred mode of training is online whereas another notable proportion (36.8%) said that they prefer offline training.

Figure 3.41 : Preferred mode of training



Table 3.39 : Preferred mode of training

Preferred mode of training	Frequency	Percent
Online	379	63.2
Physical	221	36.8
Total	600	100.0



3.12 Challenges faced by the participants

Most of the respondents did not face any problem to withdraw dollars. Only 60 (11.8%) of the total respondents faced problem while withdrawing dollars from their account. This is due to the fact that, though PayPal is not available in Bangladesh but there is other options for getting foreign earnings.

Figure 3.42 : Problem faced in financial transaction

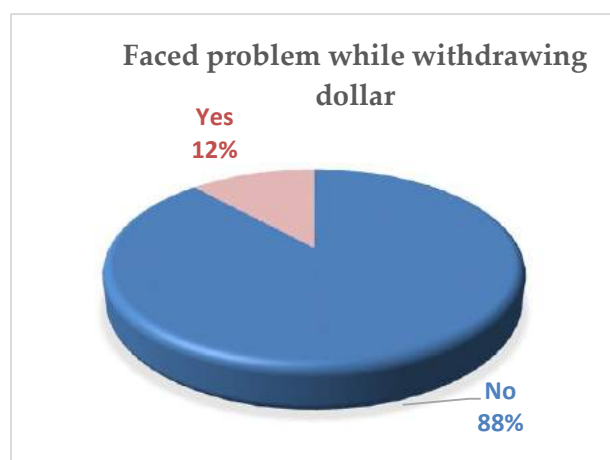


Table 3.40 : Problem faced in financial transaction

Problem while withdrawing dollar	Frequency	Percent
No	447	88.2
Yes	60	11.8
Total	507	100.0

3.13 Expected income by the trained freelancers

Among the freelancers trained by LEDP, 40% are unemployed, 40% are employed and 20% are earning through freelancing, that is 60% of the trained freelancers are earning. On average a freelancer is earning 14,116 Taka per month. The estimated monthly earning of the trained freelancers is 44,88,88,800 Taka and estimated yearly income of the trained freelancers is 538,66,65,600 Taka. The 1st phase of LEDP project was successful in this regard that the freelancers' one year earning is equivalent to the project expense/cost. Hence the project was economically cost-effective. It is expected that the trained freelancers will earn 2693,33,28,000 Taka in next five years. Within the course of time the freelancers skill will increase and their income may increase, in that case the total income may be more than the estimated income Since the 1st phase of LEDP project found cost-effective and income generating, hence the project should be expanded in 2nd Phase.



Table 3.41 : Expected Income by the freelancers trained by LEDP

Number of trained freelancers	Number of freelancers earning (60%)	Average monthly income (of one freelancer) Tk.	Total monthly income (Tk.)	Total yearly income (Expected) Tk.	Total income in 5 years (expected) Tk.
53000	31800	14116/-	44,88,88,800/-	538,66,65,600/-	2693,33,28,000/-

3.14 LEDP in gender perspective

Among all the respondents of the survey, more than 96% think that LEDP is improving the quality of lives of the rural women or LEDP has the ability of developing the living quality of rural women. Whereas only 3.7% of the respondents think that LEDP is not helping in improving the quality of rural women.

Figure 3.43 : LEDP improving quality of rural women

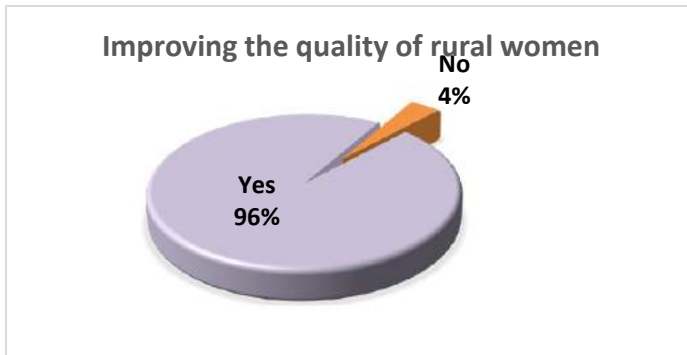


Table 3.42 : LEDP improving quality of rural women

LEDP improving the quality of rural women	Frequency	Percent
No	22	3.7
Yes	578	96.3
Total	600	100.0

The study finding reveals that unemployment rate is higher among the female participants. 28.6% of the male are unemployed where 54.2% female are unemployed. Among these participants, the percentage of employed male and female are 51.4% and 25.5% respectively. The percentage of freelancers in these two groups of gender are almost equal with 20.0% and 20.4% respectively.



Figure 3.44 : Current employment status by gender

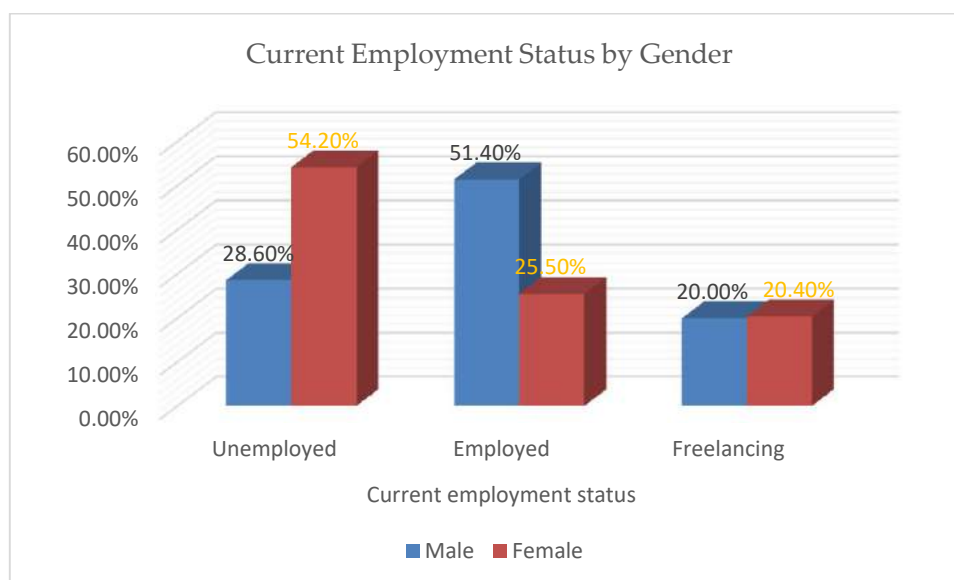


Table 3.43 : Employment status by gender

Gender	Employment status		
	Unemployed	Employed	Freelancing
Male	28.6%	51.4%	20.0%
Female	54.2%	25.5%	20.4%

Table 3.44 : Monthly income by gender

Monthly Income (taka)	Gender	
	Male	Female
0	30.2%	53.5%
1000-5000	2.5%	4.0%
6000-10000	6.5%	10.5%
11000-15000	10.2%	7.3%
16000-20000	18.8%	8.4%
21000-25000	8.3%	6.9%
26000-30000	8.9%	4.0%
30000+	14.8%	5.5%



The study finding also reveals that most of the male (30.2%) and female (53.5%) currently has no income. Almost 10.5% female have a monthly income of 6000-10000 taka where in the same income group the percentage of male is 6.5%. In the 16000-20000 income group, the percentage of male participants is 18.8% (second highest after the no income group) and female participants is 8.4%. The lowest percentage of participants (for any gender) is in the 6000–10000 taka income group which is 2.5% for male and 4.0% for female.

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLE

Table 3.45 : Average monthly income by Districts, before and after training

District	Monthly income before training	Monthly income after receiving training
Bagerhat	7363	12875
Chuadanga	13636	18827
Jessore	0	9100
Jhinaidaha	0	3000
Khulna	0	2500
Kushtia	0	9750
Magura	0	10000
Meherpur	4200	19212
Narail	0	7200
Satkhira	8000	14200
Dhaka	1325	12300
Faridpur	990	9475
Gazipur	0	6405
Gopalganj	2115	4159
Kishorganj	2100	15676
Madaripur	0	15133
Manikganj	4200	17322
Munshiganj	0	5000
Narayanganj	0	14990
Narshingdi	5309	11685



Rajbari	0	0
Sariatpur	0	7100
Tangail	7125	15644
Bogura	4000	6200
Chapai Nawabganj	2240	12290
Joypurhat	4100	9553
Naogaon	0	16719
Natore	0	11200
Pabna	0	4110
Rajshahi	3112	8300
Sirajganj	8122	13617
Dinajpur	0	12300
Gaibandha	3110	11005
Kurigram	1950	16633
Lalmonirhat	1000	14667
Nilphamari	2200	18710
Panchagarh	4714	13571
Rangpur	3606	11214
Thakurgaon	0	9228
Barguna	12200	23504
Barishal	0	14307
Bhola	4215	3100
Jhalokathi	2150	7688
Potua khali	0	0
Pirojpur	0	11200
Habiganj	0	4100
Moulvibazar	1667	14450
Sunamganj	3635	11225
Sylhet	2250	11050
Jamalpur	3995	10117
Mymensingh	4708	13797
Netrokona	1333	14143
Sherpur	7225	16667
Bandarban	6280	16810
Brahmanbaria	3116	12025
Chandpur	2245	14092



Chittagong	2125	16130
Comilla	0	7500
Cox's Bazar	1450	5425
Feni	5220	9148
Khagrachhari	6133	14325
Lakshmipur	0	3125
Noakhali	2150	9400
Rangamati	0	8325



Chapter Four

Impact Assessment of LEDP: Qualitative Perspective

4.1 Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The focus group discussions delved into key aspects of freelancing within the context of the Learning & Earning Development Program (LEDP), capturing the experiences, challenges, and strategies of freelancers in their journey.

Freelancers often embarked on their path due to a desire for independence, flexibility, or a passion for specific skills, motivated by the opportunities for financial autonomy or work-life balance that freelancing offers. Generating innovative ideas and differentiating oneself became crucial. They found inspiration from various sources, embracing experimentation, and often succeeded when trying unconventional approaches, showcasing adaptability within the LEDP framework.

Balancing specialization and diversification in their skill sets emerged as a common strategy. While some mastered one skill to attract clients, others embraced learning new skills to cater to diverse demands. Staying updated on trends was paramount; freelancers navigated this by engaging in continuous learning, utilizing LEDP-backed platforms and resources to secure more jobs and stay relevant. As part of the LEDP's guidance for newcomers, certain platforms prove immensely helpful for novices entering the freelancing realm. Platforms like Upwork, Freelancer.com, Fiverr, or specialized forums cater to various skill sets and offer visibility and diverse project opportunities, aligning with the LEDP's aim to facilitate a smooth entry into the freelancing landscape.

Building strong client relationships stood out as a vital aspect, fostering trust, loyalty, and even friendships, which occasionally extended beyond professional collaborations. Managing time amidst freelance commitments and personal life proved challenging; however, LEDP-endorsed strategies like setting boundaries and prioritizing self-care



helped maintain balance. Crafting a standout freelancer profile, finding initial projects, and managing multiple projects as beginners posed hurdles. Seeking feedback, refining profiles, networking, and starting with smaller projects were strategies recommended within the LEDP framework.

Communication challenges with clients, especially concerning language barriers, were navigated using clear, concise language, visuals, and sometimes translation tools. LEDP advocated effective communication to minimize misunderstandings. Choosing the right freelancing marketplace aligned with LEDP principles involved considering reputation, target audience, competition, and platform alignment with skills. LEDP emphasized evaluating marketplace terms and conditions to ensure they aligned with personal goals and preferences.

Staying informed about job trends was crucial for high-paying opportunities. LEDP-backed strategies involved subscribing to industry newsletters and staying updated on emerging market demands. Joining industry-specific forums, social media groups, or local freelancing communities can provide networking opportunities. These platforms allow freelancers to learn from others' experiences and potentially find clients through referrals.

Understanding client's requirements is crucial, and challenges can arise. To address uncertainties should employ several strategies. Resilience to rejection, an inherent aspect of freelancing, is nurtured by perceiving rejection as a learning curve. LEDP guidance emphasizes seeking feedback, understanding client needs better, refining proposals, and continuously improving skills based on feedback, aligning with the LEDP's ethos of continual growth and learning.

By maintaining a vigilant approach to financial transactions, freelancers can establish secure payment methods and significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to scams. Regular communication, clear contracts, and the use of trusted payment platforms are key elements in fostering a secure freelancing experience. If something feels off or too good to be true, trust your instincts. Scammers often use tactics that create a sense of urgency or pressure. Take the time to investigate and ensure the legitimacy of the client and the project.



Keeping computer and devices secure by regularly updating antivirus and anti-malware software is of utmost importance. This reduces the risk of falling victim to phishing scams or malware that could compromise financial information. Exercise extra caution when dealing with new clients or clients with limited online presence. Vet them thoroughly, check for reviews or references, and consider smaller initial projects before engaging in larger transactions. Stay informed about common scam tactics targeting freelancers. Awareness of prevalent scams, such as check fraud or phishing attempts, empowers freelancers to recognize and avoid potential threats.

Another challenge was standing out in a competitive marketplace. Address this by emphasizing unique aspects of skills and experiences, showcasing specific projects with tangible results, and ensuring profile had a professional yet personable tone to make a memorable impression. Dealing with the initial lack of reviews and endorsements was also a hurdle. We proactively sought opportunities for smaller projects to build a track record and encouraged satisfied clients to provide testimonials. This gradually bolstered our credibility and instilled confidence in potential clients.

LEDP encouraged freelancers to diversify skills and services in response to job demand changes. LEDP advocated up skilling through courses and diversifying services to remain competitive. In today's professional landscape, the advanced courses such as data analysis software SPSS, Architecture software AutoCAD, Accounting software Excel or Tally should be included in the next phase of LEDP to increase earning opportunity of the freelancers.

The LEDP encounters management challenges spanning resource allocation, curriculum design, and participant engagement. Balancing diverse learning needs, ensuring accessible resources, and maintaining participant motivation pose persistent hurdles. Striking a balance between tailored learning experiences and program scalability remains pivotal amid LEDP's evolving landscape.

In essence, the LEDP-supported discussion highlighted the multifaceted nature of freelancing, encompassing adaptation, learning, effective communication, and strategic



planning within a dynamic and ever-evolving landscape, ultimately nurturing the growth and success of freelancers.

4.2 Findings from Key Informant Interview (KII)

One of the important strategies of the government of Bangladesh to ensure employment for young educated people of the country. Previously, main focus for employment generation was on Youth Development Department through providing agriculture and different trade related training like poultry, dairy farm, embroidery, sewing etc. There is a gradual shift from traditional employment generation training to ICT based human resource development related employment generation training. Presently, government is focusing on ICT sector for employment generation especially giving importance on freelancing.

LEDP Project was a big Project in early 2014, at that time ICT Sector was not expanded like at present. Internet Connection was not available. Participants were not so learned about ICT Sector and Communicative English. After COVID-19 LEDP have a major challenge to implement the training program. So LEDP authority have to arrange online training program and they have successfully completed the training program. In case of Certificate distribution and Laptop distribution, authority have to face some challenges because the training program was all over the Country.

ICT Ministry has targeted 5 billion USD from ICT Sector by 2025, the aim is to increase freelancing for economic growth and innovation. ICT division have a target to create 25 lakhs of employment by 2030 in ICT Sector. So the division is implementing various projects to achieve this targets. It has a vision to go smart Bangladesh by 2041. The ICT division has already given certificate to freelancers to recognize them, the division is implementing many projects such as HER power, EDGE project, DEiDE projects, Shiekh Kamal IT trainings and Incubation centers etc.

Learning and Earning Development Project under ICT Division provided training to 53,000 freelancers covering all Upazillas and Districts of Bangladesh. Out of 53,000 trainees 40,000 youths were given training through virtual platform during covid-19. Two top



earner freelancers of every batch consisting of 20 freelancers are given laptops as award and hence their outstanding contributions are recognized. The government has introduced Freelancers ID for the successful freelancers for their social recognition. Besides, they get 4% cash incentive from Bangladesh Bank.

Of course, our government have already taken initiatives to solve the problems of freelancers, like internet connectivity, problem in receiving payment etc. Government provided broadband optical fiber connection in all the union, all over the educational institution by EDC Project, Info Sarker-3 project, Connected Bangladesh project etc. ICT division has introduced “Binimoy” system by Bangladesh Bank to build cashless society.

It is strongly suggested that training on advance courses (like data analysis software SPSS, Architecture software AutoCAD, AI, Block chain, Cyber security, Programming language etc.) have to be included in the 2nd Phase.

4.2.1 SWOT Analysis of LEDP

Strengths:

Bangladesh can draw on one of the largest and youngest populations in Asia, almost 65% of its population are under the age of 25. This vast human resource is the “raw material” of the ICT industry. There must be a long-term plan on where Bangladesh wants to take its human resource to tap the huge opportunity of **demographic dividend**. LEDP is transforming this demographic dividend to *economic dividend* resulting in generating self-employment for the huge number of educated unemployed youths of the country. The LEDP project was conducted all over the country and youths of grassroots level of the country. The educated youths are becoming employed after getting training and they are now earning from different market places of the different countries of the world.

With employment costs are rising in countries like India, China and the Philippines, there are vast opportunities for Bangladesh in the outsourcing industry as global employers are out looking for alternatives. Bangladesh can cash in through upgraded training. They should be trained based on the industry’s needs. If we look into the present status of the



outsourcing workers, most of them only have a general education and no special training. Educational subjects as well as degrees should be job-oriented and the human resource development should focus on the needs of the industries. Most of the government training is entry level. It should be focused on international level so that we can go for higher paying jobs.

According a report of the Oxford Internet Institute, Bangladesh stood 2nd position in regard of number of freelancers in the world. A recent report of Prothom Alo (13 November 2023), 14% of all freelancers working in the world are Bangladeshis. The LEDP Project has a great contribution behind this development of freelancing. Because this project offered training free of cost to educated youths including physically disabled people of the country.

Weakness:

Training to 40,000 youths on freelancing was given online (due to Covid-19 pandemic). All of the trainees could not be monitored as required and hence the quality of training hampered to a certain extent. There are logistical challenges, however: the high price of bandwidth and a lack of quality internet service is a problem for freelancers in rural areas. Although there are broadband connections in some areas, it is too slow to suit their work. Lack of long term and high-level training is another obstacle to getting highly-paid work. Moreover, internet connections in the hilly areas was disrupted sometimes which ultimately left a little bit negative impact on better result of the training outcomes. 5G internet connection is a big demand. We all failed to solve the Paypal issue.

LEDP portal shows that more than 4 lac training seekers registered for getting freelancing training but according to the DPP of the project and resource constraint only total 53,000 youths could be trained up.

Opportunity:

The Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) ushered new era for educated youths regarding self-employment generation which ultimately contributes for the social and economic growth of the country. Now the successful freelancers are creating agencies



and giving employment to other unemployment youths making them important earning member of the family. The trained freelancers are to be selected for the advance level training in the upcoming 2nd phase of LEDP.

There is a trillion dollars market of freelancing and Bangladeshi freelancers are giving service to the clients comparatively at low cost. But the market share for Bangladesh is still not satisfactory. Upgraded training with demandable courses and adequate number of youth like 20 to 30 lacs can increase this share and hence leaving positive impact on country's economic growth and social development.

Threats:

Lack of proper guidelines and mentoring from LEDP can lead to drop out the freelancers from mainstream of freelancing activities. Lack of logistic supports like laptops and poor internet connections in hilly and remote rural areas can hamper the freelancing industry in the country. Payment system like absence of international payment gateway like PayPal is also creating complexities in receiving payment from clients. Because of proper guidelines and knowledge of creating and maintaining an account in different international market places leads to disable of the accounts of the freelancers. In a report, 30% accounts in Fiverr is becoming disabled every year.

One of the main challenges of LEDP was selection of eligible trainees and training providing vendors. Secondly, monitoring of training system and mechanisms for ensuring better quality of training for the huge number of freelancers was another challenge. Commitment and dedication of the training providing vendors are also can be regarded as another challenge of the project.

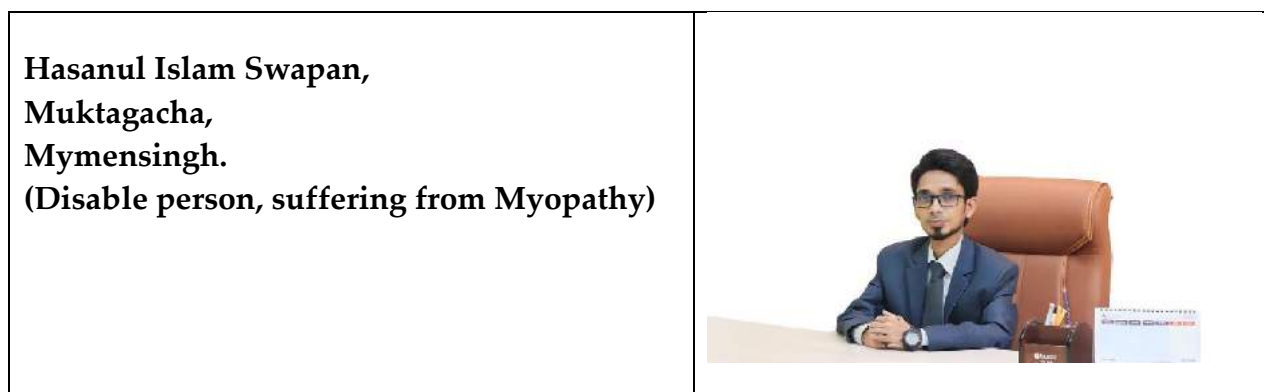
Sustainability

In order to ensure sustainability of the project the following steps should be taken:

- **Establishing Freelancer Academy and monitor the trained freelancers.**
- **Renewing the project to 2nd phase and provide training to more freelancers.**
- **Solve the payment related and internet related problems of the freelancers.**



4.3 Case Studies of Successful Freelancers



My freelancing started in 2012 when I had just finished my HSC exams. I started freelancing for two reasons, firstly I was physically ill, and I was mainly suffering from myopathy. When I was 3 years old I used to hobble and walk, the first problem appeared in my left leg and as I got older the condition started to deteriorate with age. When I am taking the HSC exam I have a problem with two legs and my health is also getting worse. Due to this, I could not dare to go to Dhaka and get admission to any reputed university, so I got admission in accounting from one of our local government colleges, govt. Shahid Smriti College Muktagacha.

I passed the commerce department in SSC in 2009 and HSC in 2011 from the local high school Nobarun Bidyanikaton, Muktagacha, and the local college govt Shahid Smriti College Muktagacha with a record score, only because of physical illness I could not participate in admission examination in any reputed university, I regret it. It seems to last a lifetime. That was one of the reasons to start freelancing and with that, my father was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2011 during my HSC examination, it was a big blow for me and my family. I am the eldest son of a family of three brothers, I was sick but my mind was never sick. There was a desire to do something as well as a tendency to support the family. My father was a truck driver by profession and his wealth was nothing. My parents educated our three brothers. That is their greatest asset. My interest in freelancing was mainly due to my physical illness and my father's cancer.



I first heard the name of freelancing in 2012 when people knew freelancing as outsourcing. It was my cousin's sister-in-law who first introduced the name of outsourcing. When he used to come to our house to check on us, he would see that my physical condition was deteriorating in some way and he used to motivate me in many ways so that I could do something myself and also give me advice about my future but then the internet was not so available as it is now. And freelancing related courses are not available as of now. Now, if you search on YouTube and Google, you can find everything, but then it was also available, maybe I could not search in that way or did not know.

At that time I used to collect two national daily newspapers from our local municipal library, one was Prothom Alo, and the other was Jugantar. They published articles on freelancing every week and I photocopied and collected them. That was the beginning and when I started using Facebook and YouTube I got to know about some freelancing training institutes and started talking to them and getting admissions. The problem is that I was a fresher at that time and I used to think that this is freelancing. They used to do some scams and also do it with us like CPA Marketing, Online Survey, etc. Now I understand that they took a lot of money for admission fees but could not provide any education that is of no use to me now. I remember I paid ninety thousand taka for a course which was my father's hard-earned money. When I realized that I couldn't learn anything, I stopped taking those courses and started looking for something new, and I spent about 7 to 8 years searching for this. In between, I kept getting ideas from YouTube and Google and watched countless videos on YouTube but didn't find any right way. Because all those resources did not have proper guidelines I did not give up. My father's physical condition and the grace of God kept improving. It served as inspiration for me.

Meanwhile, in 2020 a friend of mine suddenly came to my house and said that a government organization named LEDP will provide freelancing training along with a government certificate. The reason why my friend came to me is because he doesn't understand English well and if he wants to do the LEDP course, he has to take an examination first. Since I am a little experienced in freelancing, he told me to give him an examination. How can I pass the examination and take my friend's examination too and he passed? About 15 to 20 days after that a message came on the mobile for a live interview



and I participated in that interview, but my intention to participate was just to see how they would give admission and what questions they ask and I also excelled in the interview. Later our class from LEDP fixed a specific date and time for it. But I couldn't do class because I didn't have an Android mobile or laptop or computer then. There was a computer but it was also broken. Then my friend used to come to my house and join classes. I used to sit next to him and listen. In the first 3 to 4 classes, I was absent because I had nothing to teach. Among them was one of LEDP's coordinators, Kawsar Bhai. He joined the class and got to know everyone and looked for those who were absent like me. I hear my name on my friend's mobile when he calls my name. On that day LEDP coordinator Kawsar Bhai announced that one boy and one girl from each batch will be given a laptop prize but the top earner from the batch will be given. From that day I started taking classes with my younger brother Shanto's mobile. Because my goal was that I would need that laptop as I didn't have a laptop or a computer. And Alhamdulillah I became the top earner from LEDP and got the laptop. I have to face a lot of trouble to get it, which I will say below.

I started taking classes every day for 4 hours. One day our trainer MD Ahad asked me to open an account in the marketplace for which I needed a laptop. At that time our family was not in a position to buy a laptop, so I talked to one of my elder brothers named Abdul Kalam. He had a laptop which was in his coaching center. It was used for work, but from 6.00 am to 11.00 pm, I talked to him, used the laptop from 11.00 pm to 6.00 am, and continued to practice the tasks including opening an account in the marketplace. I remember many nights I used to work alone in a room all night, but I could not move from one chair to another without the help of another person, at that time it was difficult for me to go to the washroom and I used to hold the washroom all night long. Those days were the most difficult for me but this pain did not last long.

I got the first order from the Fiverr marketplace, it was an order of 40 dollars and the buyer was Canadian. I was given 3 days to complete this task but I submitted the task within a day and got a 5-star review. This day was the happiest day for me in the last 8 years, so I didn't have to wait much longer.





Photo 4.1: The Researcher Professor Dr. Mohammad Ahsan Uddin with the physically disable but one of the most successful freelancer (trained by LEDP) Hasanul Islam Swapan.

I started getting regular orders from Fiverr and became level one within two months and currently, I am a level two seller on Fiverr. I have been providing email marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and online reputation management (ORM) services on Fiverr and Upwork for almost 2 years and during this time I have developed good relationships with 2-3 buyers from Fiverr and they have hired me outside the marketplace. I agreed to the offer. I am still working with 2 of them. In these jobs, I have to spend 60 hours monthly for a total of 120 hours and they pay me 10 dollars per hour per month.

I kept myself in change and constantly kept learning because with the change of era, competition in freelancing is increasing and my parents were very careful in this regard. I



started contributing to the family as a functional person and could play a role in providing for all the needs of the family. In 2022, when LEDP called me to know my earnings, I didn't think I could be the top earner. Finally, one day I received a call from the Mymensingh DC office and I was interviewed live on Zoom meeting and I shared my earnings. The next day I was informed that I was a laptop winner. It was one of the happiest days of my life. In July 2022 I received a laptop as a prize from the Hon'ble Minister of State for Information and Communication Technology Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak and the Project Director of LEDP Humayun Kobir Sir.

After that, my new journey started. I started a freelancing training center called Texa Academy to create skilled manpower in freelancing. With current student strength of 200+ and 30% of them are now earning from freelancing. When I created some skilled people, I started a world-class digital marketing agency called Texa Genie in June 2023, currently we have 62 employees. We initially teach freelancing tasks and arrange interns in our agency. We are providing our services in more than 10 countries around the world and our monthly revenue at Texa Genie agency is around \$20,000 to \$22,000 and my lifetime earnings are around \$100k+.

I was honored by the Freelancer Community of Mymensingh Division (FCMD) in 2022 and was awarded the Stunning Personality award-2023 by the Independence Parliament for contribution to the IT sector and the Victory Day Award-2023 for special contribution to manpower development through IT training. My target is to create at least 5000 skilled manpower in freelancing by 2024 and provide employment to at least 300 boys and girls through the Texa Genie agency.



**Abed Siraj,
Patuakhali,
Physically disable (by
birth),
Age 68**



Even at the age of 68, he continues to work. He freelances in graphic design and digital marketing, earning a monthly income ranging from 40,000 to 50,000 taka. In the field of freelancing outsourcing, where the participation of the youth is high, Aved Siraj stands out without a doubt. Abed Siraj was a disabled person since childhood. He grew up in Bauful, Patuakhali. During the great Liberation War of 1971, he came to Dhaka with his family. He found shelter in different relatives' houses in Dhanmondi. He studied and grew up in Dhaka. Due to various reasons, he had to take a break from his studies for several years. In 1990, he passed the Higher Secondary examination from the Government Bangla College in Mirpur and graduated (Honours) in Social Welfare from Mohammadpur Central College in 1994.

In the early days of computer proliferation in the country, he started learning computer works at a relative's house. Aved Siraj works on data entry projects and, in 2004, he joined an international organization in Bangladesh after a teacher's recommendation. He worked in the field of data entry for four years at the organization. Later, he took up short-term jobs in several private companies. Facing communication issues, Aved Siraj finds it challenging to sustain long-term employment in any organization.



After reaching the age of sixty, it seems like a transformative journey unfolds in Aved Siraj's life. Since 2016, he contemplated learning various aspects of freelancing outsourcing. Despite exploring multiple training centers, his advanced age and communication challenges posed obstacles, preventing him from enrolling in any courses. Aved Siraj shared, "In 2018, a friend and I decided to join Dhaka's Creative IT Institute. Although we hesitated to enter the institution, questioning why we came, we expressed our desire to learn graphic design. Assumptions were made that due to our age, we might reconsider. However, both of us were admitted to the Creative IT Institute." Aved Siraj felt the need to learn graphic design and started learning it. At one point, he and his friends started working together. Aved Siraj mentioned, "We used to divide the earnings from whatever work we found. It wasn't a substantial income, but it felt good, and that was just the beginning."

In 2020, Aved Siraj took a course in digital marketing under the "Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP)" of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division. He found the course enjoyable, and he received recognition among the trainees in his batch, even earning an award. Siraj got married in 1996 and currently lives in Mirpur, Dhaka, with his wife and three children—two sons and a daughter. They used to rely on ancestral property in Mirpur for their livelihood. However, unexpectedly, the family faced financial difficulties, and in 2020, Aved Siraj's mother passed away. Just 40 days later, his elder sister also died of COVID-19.

In the midst of these challenges, Aved Siraj ventured into freelancing even more. He took on online outsourcing projects through various freelance marketplaces such as Freelancer.com, 99designs, Upwork.com and Fiver.com. Aved Siraj specializes in creating T-shirt designs for various clients abroad. Up until now, he has crafted designs for nearly three thousand T-shirts. Aved Siraj says, "Regardless of age, as long as there is determination and enthusiasm for work, one should not retire. Learning has no age limit. Many people, like myself, exist. They have overcome challenges from various places, faced hardships, but haven't given up. I haven't lost hope; day and night, I've worked hard and achieved what I could. I continue working with skills. Whatever income is generated, it sustains the family."



Mahmudul Hasan

Dinajpur

Age 31



Mahmudul Hasan received the best freelancer award at the National Freelancer Conference held in the capital Dhaka on August 2023. In the fiscal year 2022-23, Mahmudul's total income was two lakh dollars, which is more than two crore taka. Earlier, he received Basis Outsourcing Award in 2021. He established himself as a successful freelancer at the age of 31. Now want to teach for free. He earns an average of 16,000 US dollars per month from his house in Phulbari, Dinajpur. In terms of money, it is more than 16 lakhs. He left the job suddenly one day. It was a teaching job in a primary school in 2010. Begged the family to buy a computer. But he didn't get a computer. Mahmudul Hasan left Dinajpur home and came to Dhaka. After coming to Dhaka, Mahmudul started working in a garment factory. Worked morning and evening. The objective is to save money to buy a computer and learn to work for freelance outsourcing. At that time (2011) he was getting a salary of four and a half thousand taka. Had to work standing for a long time.

Mahmudul's dream was to become an engineer, study at Bangladesh University of Engineering (BUET). Although as student he was good, the financial condition of the family was not favorable. Mahmudul's father Anisur Rahman fell ill when he was in seventh grade. Mahmudul is the eldest among three brothers and sisters. He had to sit in his father's raw material shop in Dinajpur's Phulbari Bazar. After that many times had to sit in the shop to support the family. Despite repeated interruptions in studies, he did well



in high school. But due to financial reasons, he could not take the admission test in BUET. While his friends were preparing for university admission, Mahmudul had to look for a job. Didn't get that either. After that, he thought that he would study computer science somewhere else, not at Buet. To manage money for this purpose he thought of working online as a freelancer to pay for his studies. Now this is his profession.

Mahmudul heard about freelancing from a friend in 2010. After reading an article about freelancing published in *Prothom Alo*, interest arose within him. Mahmudul did not have a computer, internet or smartphone at that time. However, he used to read newspapers regularly. Then understood that there is no time limit in freelancing work. There will be no disruption to studies, and money can earned staying at home. Mahmudul thought he would work on website design and development. So he learned Photoshop first. He brought books from Dhaka and started practicing. He liked graphic design while working and decided to improve his skills in this subject.

Mahmudul Hasan, after graduation in Sociology from Dinajpur Government College, started working as a freelancer from 2012. After a year of graphic design practice, he took part in a logo design competition at Freelancer.com, an online job-seeking website (marketplace). He was second for the first time. His interest grew, he used to participate regularly in competitions. In 2013, he earned \$90 as the first in a logo design competition. After that Mahmudul started working for foreign customers besides the competition. Once an old customer offered him a job. Which can be done remotely. Mahmudul accepted that proposal. After a few months, he was offered to work in London from that company. But at that time Mahmudul decided to work as a freelancer. Without going to London, he started a company with a few friends and acquaintances. But after a few months this initiative failed. After that, Mahmudul started working alone again.

Mahmudul Hasan told *Prothom Alo*, "No one can stop you if you have desire and love for your work. I have suffered a lot, which I can't explain, but now I am getting the results. Many people see my success, but no one knows the difficult story behind it. I have a company called Imagine Digital. Now I have a team there, seven people work with me." Mahmudul wants to do something for the children of his area. Also wants to teach them for free. Mahmudul Hasan's future plans include selling his designs on his own website.



Suman Kanti Das.

Khagrachhari Sadar

Khagrachhari



After completing the LEDP course from Khagrachhari Hill District, now I am earning dollars through freelance work for international clients. By undertaking the LEDP course, I have succeeded and become a proficient freelancer. Before enrolling in the LEDP course, I completed my studies at Khagrachhari Govt College and I worked as a computer operator and at a photocopy shop, being the sole provider for my family. Despite dedicating 10 to 12 hours a day, my monthly income was limited to 15 thousand taka, making my days quite challenging. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic worsened my situation. While working as a computer operator, I heard about freelancing but lacked the knowledge and guidance to pursue this career path. Although I had dreams and aspirations, finding the right direction was a constant struggle.

In 2020, a friend introduced me to the LEDP course, a government initiative providing free freelancing courses. I applied for the Digital Marketing course, successfully underwent the selection process, and embarked on my LEDP journey in 2020. Within a month of starting the course, I began earning income through online freelancing platforms such as Upwork. So far, I have earned more than \$95,000 and I consistently generate an income ranging from 7,000 to 8,000 USD per month. Now I am engaged in 20 ongoing projects in various countries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Also, I receive 10-15 new jobs every month.



Beyond freelancing, I have established my own online freelancing company. Actively contributing to LEDP, Lot 9 & my LEDP batch. I provide opportunities for fellow freelancers and offer training to newcomers in freelancing. I am committed to contributing to the nation by providing free training and support to freelancers. By completing the LEDP course, I have become self-reliant. Now, I am financially successful.

I express sincere thanks to the Government of Bangladesh, particularly Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and the honorable Adviser to the Prime Minister on ICT Affairs, Mr. Sajeeb Wazed Joy, for arranging such a beautiful training program free of cost and their visionary leadership in building a Smart Bangladesh.

Gratitude also extends to the honorable State Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Mr. Junaid Ahmed Palak, the Secretary of the ICT Division, and the project director of LEDP, Mr. Mohammad Humayun Kobir.

My immense gratitude goes to LEDP and Lot 9, especially Mr. Ruhul, Mr. Tarikul, Mr. Panna, and my mentor Ms. Sultana Rabea, for their invaluable guidance and support.

I attribute my success to my determination, efforts, and the right direction provided by LEDP. I know many LEDP Trainees have been successful by doing LEDP courses. I believe that anyone can succeed in freelancing with the right training and guidance.

I humbly request LEDP to continue offering excellent training and consider introducing new courses such as Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Security.

The LEDP course has played a pivotal role in shaping my freelancing career, and I am grateful for the opportunities it has provided.

I seek your blessings as I endeavor to establish myself as a successful entrepreneur and contribute to the development of my country.



Sreerupa Devi

Graphic Designer

Feni



I am **Sreerupa Devi**, A professional Graphics Designer and animator. Currently pursuing Diploma Engineering in Computer Science at Dagonbhuiyan Science and Engineering Institute, in the 8th semester.

Let's start the story from the beginning of my life. The year was 2020, the most challenging time of my life. Unlike other boys and girls, my life was not as joyful. In my small family, consisting of my mother and father, from the very beginning of life, one word has brought immense pain and suffering to my family.

The word "cancer" cast a shadow over my mother's body, as she battled blood cancer. The journey with my ailing mother brought forth endless pain and sorrow. It's hard to put into words the story of those days because reflecting on them brings back the pain as if cutting through the body. We know that blood cancer is not easy to get rid of. Its treatment gradually drains a family financially. After the diagnosis of my mother's cancer, our family became financially burdened, and seeing the suffering of the family, my personal joy and happiness seemed almost forgotten.

My mother's treatment was in the first stage and due to lack of money progressing to the next stage was not feasible. Consequently, her physical condition was gradually deteriorating. My father, a high school teacher, could not manage in any way with his single income and the help given by our relatives.



I always wished I could earn something on my own to support my mother, but being a girl at this age, there weren't many opportunities.

One day, our college principal, Mr. Ajoy Kumar Dev, came to our class and informed us about the "Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) initiated by our Esteemed Prime Minister, daughter of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina, with the goal of eradicating unemployment and building a digital Bangladesh. Through this project, we would receive training in several skill development areas, enabling us to easily earn through freelancing. Inspired by our principal's advice, I enrolled in this course and chose the 'Graphics Design' sector.

From childhood, I had a lot of enthusiasm for design and cartoons, so Graphic Design became my first choice. Gradually, as I advanced in the course, I kept increase quality of my skills to become more reliable in marketplace. In the LEDP project, with the help of our trainers, I gained in-depth knowledge of the fundamentals of graphic designing. Alongside, I learned how to create profiles on freelancing platforms and how to navigate and work on those Websites.

Initially, I started working on small designs like logos, banners, posters, etc. on marketplaces. I opened a portfolio showcasing these designs and actively searched for work. I participated in free contests on freelancer sites. In this manner, I continued for a few days, facing some initial challenges. However, one day, at 4 AM, I suddenly received a mail notification stating that I had won a logo design contest worth £10 GBP. I promptly contacted the client and successfully delivered the file, marking a significant achievement in my freelancing journey.

The foreign client was pleased with my work, and this continued collaboration opened up more opportunities for me. Within a few days of winning that first contest, I secured victory in several more contests, establishing connections with more and more international clients. Approximately 70% of my clients now entrust me with all their design work, contributing to the gradual growth of my earnings.

The main goal and inspiration for my earnings were to finance my mother's cancer treatment. With the grace of God, I have been able to gradually fund my mother's complete treatment. Describing the journey to my mother's cancer recovery is not as easy as it may



seem. Over the past one and a half years, while managing my mother's treatment expenses through freelancing, I have felt the helplessness of not being able to be with her during her treatment. It's not easy to convey the pain and struggle of studying alongside freelancing work and being unable to be with my ailing mother every moment. Despite these challenges, the word "success" now resonates with the story of my journey.

Now my mother is quite healthy, and I have become self-reliant. It started with small projects, and now I am working on big projects alongside several American companies. Initially, I worked on graphic design like logos, flyers, banners, etc. Over time, I understood the demand and increased efficiency of my skills. Currently, I am successful in cartoon design, game characters, concept design, story illustration, website user interfaces, and 2D cartoon animation.

My entire journey was facilitated by the LEDP project. I'll never forget the support I received from my beloved "Dagonbhuiyan Science and Engineering Institute". Without my institute, I wouldn't have known about this great government project. Completing the course of the LEDP project, I received the "Top Earner" recognition and a laptop as a gift from LEDP.

So far, I have achieved skill that make me self-reliant, right now I gained knowledge that can help me to run my life and family. That experience and skill can't be compared by earning money. But for information, my total earnings amount to \$58,000 and more from the marketplace and outside marketplace work.

I seek everyone's prayers and blessings to continue striving for greater heights, hoping to inspire those boys and girls who, like me, were once helpless and facing defeat in life.

Finally, I dedicate this success and praise to my mother. I express my gratitude and thanks to the honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for implementing this great project. I also extend my thanks and gratitude to the honorable ICT Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy, honorable State Minister of Information and Communication Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak. Also, my appreciation goes to all the officials of the LEDP project.



Chapter Five

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Impact of LEDP in Employment Generation

Learning and Earning Development Project under ICT Division provided training to 53,000 freelancers covering all Upazillas and Districts of Bangladesh. Out of 53,000 trainees 40,000 youths were given training through virtual platform during covid-19. The Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) ushered new era for educated youths regarding self-employment generation which ultimately contributes for the social and economic growth of the country. Now the successful freelancers are creating agencies and giving employment to other unemployment youths making them important earning member of the family. The trained freelancers are to be selected for the advance level training in the upcoming 2nd phase of LEDP.

This survey has done after about 2 years of the completing the training of LEDP. In this mean time we find that a significant number of respondents have been employed in different institutions and one-fifth started freelancing after completing course. But about 40% is still unemployed even after receiving training, there is scope to do something for them. The study finding reveals that unemployment rate is higher among the female participants. 28.6% of the male are unemployed where 54.2% female are unemployed. If LEDP project is extended in the 2nd Phase, LEDP may take some initiatives for these trained unemployed youths, such initiatives will increase the sustainability of the programme.

About 93% (560 out of 600) of the respondents think that the training they received created excellent opportunity for self-employment. That is the training provided by LEDP has enhanced their skill enough to eradicate their unemployment, that is almost all of the respondents find the opportunity of self-development through the courses.



Study finding depicts that 95% of the respondents think that LEDP is helping the country to solve the unemployment problem. Only 5% of the respondents think otherwise. This 5% response as this programme should be arranged in more organized way to get more efficient result.

Impact of LEDP in Increasing Income

A total of 360 (60%) respondents have seen an increase in their earnings after the training because of the skills and knowledge they have gained from the training. On other hand, 40% have not experience like this as most of them have continued study still now and did not involve in income generating activities.

About 42% of the participants have had an improvement in their socio-economic status after receiving training from LEDP. On the other hand, 57.8% did not experience any improvement in their socio-economic status. As most of the respondents are still in learning stage, that's why they don't get the chance of socio-economic improvement till now. But in long run it is expected that rest of the trained participants will experience improvement in their socio-economic status.

The study finding reveals that in every division the average monthly income of the respondents who attended training of LEDP has increased. The highest income increase observed in Dhaka division, in this division the monthly income of the freelancers increased more than five times after receiving training. In case of most successful freelancers, the successful freelancers for Sirajgonj has the highest income level (\$ 256214 per year), successful freelancers of Chittagong has the second highest income (\$ 210563 per year) and successful freelancers of Dinajpur has the third highest income (\$206,250 per year).

Role of LEDP in Women Empowerment

LEDP is first initiative in Bangladesh to empower rural women through ICT and played a vital role to include young rural women in the journey towards "Digital Bangladesh". ICT Division of the Ministry of Post & Telecommunications (MoPT), conducted the LEDP



project activates to launch an ambitious reach for the development of rural women across different parts of Bangladesh. Six (06) buses, fully equipped with modern ICT training facilities, were successfully deployed to offer ICT training particularly designed for the women who cannot move from their native locality due to various socio-economic constraints. LEDP helped to build a strong network of talented women, who are now contributing through ICT as much as men. The project generated massive interest among the women, especially in rural areas, to pursue entrepreneurship through ICT.

Role of LEDP in Skill Development

More than 60% respondents were satisfied with the training, where another 5% respondents were very satisfied. Besides, 28.7% respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. But rest 4% (12) respondents were not satisfied with the training.

The result shows that LEDP offered the development of the participant's English communication skill in 63.2% cases. Other 36.8% respondents of the survey did not agree with this. It is mentionable that LEDP offered training on technical subjects, there was no language training, but since the training was offered in English it helped the participants in developing their English skill.

Almost all the respondents said that they would recommend the training to others. Only 1.8% respondents said that they would not recommend the training to others. So it can be said that, most of the respondents satisfy with the training and think this type of programme will be helpful for others.

Almost all the respondents recommended to renew the training in next phase. Whereas only 2.3% of the respondents did not recommend. Almost all the participants recommended to renew LEDP to 2nd phase since they have seen it beneficiary to the youth, family and the country.

Around 90% of the respondents suggested for increasing the number of trainees, since they think that it more unemployed youth should get the opportunity. On the other hand, 10%



students did not suggest for increasing the number of trainees, rather they suggest for a single teacher for every course, so that the teacher can complete a course at the same pace.

Among the respondents, 97% suggested for adding more courses in this training program, they suggested for including advanced courses like as data entry and analysis software SPSS, programming language etc. Rest 3% of respondents suggested for developing the ongoing courses rather than adding new courses.

Advocacy of LEDP for Establishing Freelancers in Marketplace

Another challenge was standing out in a competitive marketplace. Address this by emphasizing unique aspects of skills and experiences, showcasing specific projects with tangible results, and ensuring profile had a professional yet personable tone to make a memorable impression. LEDP encouraged freelancers to diversify skills and services in response to job demand changes. LEDP advocated up skilling through courses and diversifying services to remain competitive.

Crafting a standout freelancer profile, finding initial projects, and managing multiple projects as beginners posed hurdles. Seeking feedback, refining profiles, networking, and starting with smaller projects were strategies recommended within the LEDP framework. Building strong client relationships stood out as a vital aspect, fostering trust, loyalty, and even friendships, which occasionally extended beyond professional collaborations.

Staying informed about job trends was crucial for high-paying opportunities. Joining industry-specific forums, social media groups, or local freelancing communities can provide networking opportunities. These platforms allow freelancers to learn from others' experiences and potentially find clients through referrals.

Communication challenges with clients, especially concerning language barriers, were navigated using clear, concise language, visuals, and sometimes translation tools. Understanding client's requirements is crucial, and challenges can arise. To address uncertainties should employ several strategies. Resilience to rejection, an inherent aspect of freelancing, is nurtured by perceiving rejection as a learning curve.



By maintaining a vigilant approach to financial transactions, freelancers can establish secure payment methods and significantly reduce the risk of falling victim to scams. Scammers often use tactics that create a sense of urgency or pressure. Take the time to investigate and ensure the legitimacy of the client and the project.

Keeping computer and devices secure by regularly updating antivirus and anti-malware software is of utmost importance. This reduces the risk of falling victim to phishing scams or malware that could compromise financial information.

As part of the LEDP's guidance for newcomers, certain platforms prove immensely helpful for novices entering the freelancing realm. Platforms like Upwork, Freelancer.com, Fiverr, or specialized forums cater to various skill sets and offer visibility and diverse project opportunities, aligning with the LEDP's aim to facilitate a smooth entry into the freelancing landscape.

Challenges Faced by LEDP

The LEDP encounters management challenges spanning resource allocation, curriculum design, and participant engagement. Balancing diverse learning needs, ensuring accessible resources, and maintaining participant motivation pose persistent hurdles. Striking a balance between tailored learning experiences and program scalability remains pivotal amid LEDP's evolving landscape.

LEDP portal shows that more than 4 lac training seekers registered for getting freelancing training but according to the DPP of the project and resource constraint only total 53,000 youths could be trained up.

One of the main challenges of LEDP was selection of eligible trainees and training providing vendors. Secondly, monitoring of training system and mechanisms for ensuring better quality of training for the huge number of freelancers was another challenge.



Commitment and dedication of the training providing vendors are also can be regarded as another challenge of the project.

In today's professional landscape, the advanced courses such as data analysis software SPSS, Architecture software AutoCAD, Accounting software Excel or Tally, programming language, Artificial Intelligence etc. should be included in the next phase of LEDP to increase earning opportunity of the freelancers.

Role of LEDP in Achieving SDG

LEDP helped to achieve certain SDGs – ending poverty (SDG 1), ensuring inclusive and equitable education and universal learning opportunities (SDG 4), achieving gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, productive employment and decent work (SDG 8) and reducing inequality (SDG 10).

LEDP created decent job opportunities for underprivileged young women through online employment. With the right set of skills, young Bangladeshi women got chance to compete in the global freelancing market. The project contributed to Bangladesh Government's vision for equal employment of women in ICT by 2030 which conforms SDG target 8.5 (Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men).

Role of LEDP in Leveraging 4th Industrial Revolution

To tackle the challenges of 4th industrial revolution, Bangladesh is focusing on creating skilled human resources who will have proper digital knowledge to cope with fast-changing development in coming days. LEDP is serving this purpose. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) is upon us. The spread of digital technologies is transforming all types of global flows. Constantly jobs are being eaten up by advanced automation, and according to demonstrated technology potentials, most of the manual jobs



in the RMG sector are vulnerable to automation. To counter this trend the government will have to co-design and pilot innovative new approaches to policy and governance to counter negative implications and leverage Fourth Industrial Revolution. The focus should be on digital knowledge, integrating big data, data analytics, AI etc. In reality, the entire education ecosystem may have to be redesigned to address the dynamically changing issue.

Role of LEDP in Building Smart Bangladesh

Smart Bangladesh is about being inclusive, about the people, the citizens of Bangladesh. Built on the 4 pillars of Smart Citizens, Smart Government, Smart Economy and Smart Society, it is about bridging the digital divide by innovating and scaling sustainable digital solutions that all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic background, all businesses, regardless of their size, can benefit from. Bangladesh is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and becoming a developed and smart Bangladesh by 2041. But for that, we have to pay more attention to employment. Emphasis is placed on increasing youth employment and entrepreneurship and self-employment. The government wants to build the future Bangladesh as a smart Bangladesh, where manpower will be smart, everyone will learn to do everything online, the economy will be an e-economy, where the entire money management will be done on digital devices. Our education, health, and employability will all be through e-governance. Digital devices will be used in everything including e-education, and e-health.

50 years of independence in 2021, Bangladesh has become 'Digital Bangladesh', which started in 2008. Bangladesh today has achieved a revolution in the spread of modern information technology. Digital Bangladesh is no longer a dream but a reality. Digital Bangladesh is moving forward in the journey of Smart Bangladesh 2041 by defining four specific main pillars of connectivity for all, skilled human resource development, e-Government and ICT industry promotion for the implementation of Digital Bangladesh. According a report of the Oxford Internet Institute, Bangladesh stood 2nd position in regard of number of freelancers in the world. A recent report of Prothom Alo (13 November 2023), 14% of all freelancers working in the world are Bangladeshis. The LEDP Project has a great contribution behind this development of freelancing. Because this



project offered training free of cost to educated youths including physically disabled people of the country. LEDP is thus contributing in building Smart Bangladesh, hence the project should be extended to 2nd Phase.

Role of LEDP in Expansion of GiG Economy

The gig economy is a transformative and disruptive economic model in which physical goods, assets, and services are consumed through the rental, sharing, or exchange of resources using technology across the globe via crowd-based services or intermediaries without any permanent transfer of ownership, thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of economic activities by lowering transaction costs and providing consumers with more information (Sundararajan, 2017).

Digitalization such as internet access and smartphone availability has played a significant influence in the development and expansion of the gig economy in Bangladesh. According to the Oxford Internet Institute, Bangladesh is now the second-largest source of online labor in the world, with a 16 percent share of the global online workforce. This is after India, which has a 24 percent share of the global online workforce. Bangladesh has been a popular place to outsource work since the beginning of worldwide online freelance work. According to the ICT Division of the Bangladesh Government, there are about 650,000 freelancers in Bangladesh. The Pioneer's Global Gig-Economy Index, which was released in 2019, ranks Bangladesh as the eighth country with the highest year-on-year growth in freelance income.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

❖ Demographic Dividend & Expansion of LEDP to 2nd Phase

A notable demographic feature in the country is the rapid rise in the youth labour force. Youth are typically savvier in digital applications and innovation. Growth of youth labour force in a country is considered to be indicative of a potential for demographic dividend and can be a positive factor in attaining economic growth. LEDP is transforming this



demographic dividend to *economic dividend* resulting in generating self-employment for the huge number of educated unemployed youths of the country. The LEDP project was conducted all over the country and youths of grassroots level of the country. The educated youths are becoming employed after getting training and they are now earning from different market places of the different countries of the world. Therefore, over the next 20 years, Bangladesh's progress to middle-income and high-income status will have to be largely driven by a high performing export sector that is competitive in a highly globalized world. Hence to transform demographic dividend to economic dividend and to tackle the challenges of 4th industrial revolution government should introduce the 2nd phase of LEDP and provide training to more youths.

❖ Regulatory Framework

To ensure the sustainable growth of the freelance sector, it is imperative to establish a robust regulatory framework that safeguards the rights and interests of freelancers. Legal and contractual protections are paramount in providing freelancers with a secure working environment (Khan, 2019). This includes measures to enforce fair payment practices, protect intellectual property rights, and establish clear contractual terms. Additionally, mechanisms for dispute resolution must be established to address conflicts and grievances promptly (Khan, 2019). This will instil confidence in freelancers and foster a conducive environment for business operations.

❖ Skill Development

Investment in educational and skill development programs tailored to the needs of freelancers is crucial (Ahmed, 2020). Enhancing the skills and capabilities of freelancers is essential for them to remain competitive in the global market. This strategic investment in human capital will not only benefit individual freelancers but also contribute to the overall growth of the sector. These programs should cover a range of topics, including technical skills specific to freelancing domains, business management, and marketing strategies. Moreover, promoting entrepreneurship and business acumen among freelancers can empower them to take on larger projects and expand their client base (Ahmed, 2020).



❖ Technological Infrastructure

The effectiveness and productivity of freelancers heavily rely on access to reliable and high-speed internet connectivity, as well as advanced digital platforms (Islam & Hasan, 2021). Therefore, significant investment in technological infrastructure is warranted. This includes initiatives to improve broadband accessibility in both urban and rural areas, as well as the provision of state-of-the-art hardware and software tools. Furthermore, encouraging innovation and technological adoption among freelancers will enable them to stay at the forefront of their respective fields (Islam & Hasan, 2021). This technological empowerment will be instrumental in elevating the competitiveness of Bangladeshi freelancers in the global market.

❖ Partnerships With Global Platforms

International collaborations can lead to increased visibility and opportunities for freelancers, ultimately translating into higher export volumes. Fostering partnerships with global freelancing platforms and clients can open up new avenues for Bangladeshi freelancers to access international markets (Rahman & Khan, 2021). Additionally, negotiating favorable trade agreements that specifically support freelance exports will provide freelancers with a competitive edge in the global marketplace (Smith, 2020). These agreements should address issues such as tariff barriers, cross-border payments, and legal recognition of freelance contracts.

❖ Priority for Exports

The economic impact of freelancing on export earnings is substantial, with the sector accounting for an increasing share of the overall export revenue (Smith, 2020). The freelance sector has emerged as a crucial driver of economic growth and export earnings in Bangladesh. As evidenced by recent studies (Smith, 2020; Rahman & Khan, 2021), freelancing has contributed significantly to the country's foreign exchange reserves and has played a pivotal role in diversifying the export portfolio beyond traditional sectors such as garments and agriculture. This emphasizes the need for a coordinated approach in



policy making that integrates the freelance sector into the broader export strategy of Bangladesh.

❖ Sustainability

Lack of proper guidelines and mentoring from LEDP can lead to drop out the freelancers from mainstream of freelancing activities. Lack of logistic supports like laptops and poor internet connections in hilly and remote rural areas can hamper the freelancing industry in the country. Payment system like absence of international payment gateway like PayPal is also creating complexities in receiving payment from clients. Because of proper guidelines and knowledge of creating and maintaining an account in different international market places leads to disable of the accounts of the freelancers. In a report, 30% accounts in Fiverr is becoming disabled every year. In order to ensure sustainability of the project the following steps should be taken:

- Establishing Freelancer Academy and monitor the trained freelancers.
- Renewing the project to 2nd phase and provide training to more freelancers.
- Solve the payment related and internet related problems of the freelancers.

❖ Freelancer Academy

In order to ensure sustainability of the LEDP project and enhance its benefit, establishing a freelancer academy is of utmost importance. Creating forums and fostering collaborative communities where freelancers from different demographics can interact and exchange information about developments, trends and best practices. Peer learning and networking would prevent obsolescence. Establishing networks, communities, and forums that bring together freelancers for knowledge sharing, skill enhancement, and networking opportunities can be beneficial for collaboration and professional growth.



❖ **Reducing Skill Gap**

As the demand for skills continues to change globally, freelancers in Bangladesh will have to upskill their existing skill sets to stay relevant. The role of the government in preparing for the future freelancing market is crucial to sustaining the growth of the industry. Besides, investing in training platforms specialising in tomorrow's most in-demand skills could reduce unemployment.

❖ **Payment Gateways**

Ensuring access to international payment gateways and facilitating smooth financial transactions for freelancers is critical. Simplifying processes for receiving payments from global clients can help freelancers overcome financial hurdles. The universal and popular payment gateways should be made available for ensuring secured transactions.

❖ **Social Awareness**

Government should raise social awareness about this potential sector through campaigns and other publicity tools to remove the social barriers and elevate the social acceptability of the profession. Efforts should be exerted to highlight and improve the overall country branding. Enforcement of relevant rules and regulations to foster this promising sector is crucial. Updating the National Policy keeping greater consideration to the IT freelancing activities is also important. With collaboration of strategic partners a sustainable IT eco-system should be developed in actualizing the 'Digital Bangladesh' agenda.

❖ **Government Fund Support**

A separate government fund should be apportioned to provide the necessary capital through the banking channel to support the freelancers in initiating and expanding their operations.



Annexure-1

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Annexure-2

Terms of Reference (ToR)

(Publication through Quantitative & Qualitative Research)

Background of the Study

As part of Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh, the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has approved a Project titled "Learning and Earning Development Project"(2nd phase) to be implemented by the ICT Division of the Ministry of Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology. Learning and Earning Development Project (LEDP) is a significant initiative taken by Bangladesh ICT Division to provide free training in different freelancing skills in two phases with the purpose to create opportunities for potential unemployed and educated youth of the country. The goal of the LEDP project is to leverage ICT for the country's next stage of growth and development. The project is ending in December 2023 and the ministry is thinking about the evaluation of likewise project in 2nd phase or not. In this context, for decision-making, it is necessary to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the completed LEDP project and publish a report in two steps on the research findings.

The specific objectives of the LEDP project:

- Evaluation of 40,000 Participants through Professional Outsourcing Training) to create skilled IT manpower
- 13,000 Participants for Professional Outsourcing Training and develop them as skilled manpower to be a freelancer in the IT/ICT sector.
- To expose outsourcing capabilities in the IT/ICT era to global market leading.
- To expose the training implementation by the vendor companies
- To create a new job facility in the global market and improve national awareness at all levels.



- To catalyze the growth of Bangladesh’s IT/ICT industry for employment creation.
- To materialize the increase of foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh by outsourcing diversification.
- To evaluate the stakeholder progress, services, survey, and expected output cum information
- To catalyze the growth of Bangladesh’s IT/ICT industry for employment creation.
- To use the database of the project to ventilate the field verification result.
- ETC as per the requirement of the project authority.

The objectives of the study:

1. To assess the success of the LEDP project in achieving its goal through the quantitative and qualitative survey.
2. Providing the survey report as a publication.

The specific task of the study

The specific task of quantitative & qualitative verification will be done as per the survey and evaluation rule/guidelines in this context. Specification includes the following:

1. Conduct a telephone/online survey on 500 persons who obtained training from the LEDP project using a specific questionnaire.
2. Conducting 5 FGDs.
3. Conducting 5 Case studies
4. Conducting 5 KIIs.
5. Entry and analysis of survey data.
6. Writing report and presentation of the report.



7. Providing 25 copies of printed reports to LEDP.
8. And so on as demands.

Required qualification of the consultant firm

1. The consulting firm should have a trade license.
2. The proprietor of the consulting firm should have the TIN number and should have evidence of submission of tax.
3. The proprietor of the consulting firm should have experience in research.
4. The proprietor of the consulting firm should have publications in a journal.

Team Composition

Position	Qualification	Task
Team Leader (1)	-Should have Hons. and Masters in Statistics. -Should have PhD in science discipline. -Should have minimum 12 years of experience of research work. - Should have at least 15 publications in reputed journal.	- Leading the research work. -Writing report of the research -Presenting the report -Guiding other team members in performing their works
Research Assistant (1)	-Should be University graduate/student -Should have capability to process and analyze data using SPSS/Excel software.	- Data entry/processing. - Data analysis - Assisting Team Leader in preparing report
Data Collector (2)	-Should be University graduate/student -Should have capability to collect data	- Collection of data (Quantitative and Qualitative)



Deliverables

The Consultant shall deliver the following to the client :

1. Data collection instruments
2. Soft copy and hard copy of data
3. Soft copy of draft report
4. Presenting draft report in LEDP/ICT Ministry.
5. 25 printed hard copies of Final Report

Support from the Client

The client (LEDP) shall provide the following support to the client:

1. Shall provide all project related data and reports.
2. Shall provide vehicle support for conducting FGD.
3. Shall arrange participants and place for conducting FGD.

Allocated Time and Budget

The maximum budget for the work is 10,00,000/- (Ten lakh taka) and the allocated time for the work is 1.5 months (after awarding of the work).

Payment Mode

The payment will be given in three installments as per the information given below:

Installment	Amount	Remarks
1st	40%	After awarding work and before starting data collection
2nd	30%	After submission of the draft report (Soft copy)
3rd	30%	After submission of Final Report (25 Hard copies)



Annexure-3
Survey Questionnaire

Learning & Earning Development Programme (LEDP)
Questionnaire

Date:...../...../.....

1. Name of the respondent:
2. Age
3. Gender --- Male/ Female / others
4. District name
5. Living area:
 - a. City/Town
 - b. Rural
6. Educational qualification: HSC/Graduation/Masters
7. Current Employment status: a) Employed b) Unemployed C) Freelancer
8. Monthly Income :.....Taka
9. Marital status: a) Married b) Unmarried c) Divorced d) Others
10. How many members you have in your family?
11. How many earning member do you have in your family?
12. Have you participated in training of Learning & Earning Development Program (LEDP)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
13. If yes, how did you first learn about the program?
 - a. Through internet



- b. Through friend
- c. Social Media

14. What motivated you to participate in the LEDP?

- a) To develop skill
- b) To create earning opportunity
- c) Motivated by friend/relative

15. Is it a training free of cost or not?

- a) Free of cost
- b) With cost

16. Did the LEDP offer the development of your English communicative skill?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Did you fill up the part of the training registration by yourself?

- a. Yes
- b. No

18. Which course attracted you the most?

- a. Digital marketing course
- b. Web design & development course
- c. Graphic Design

19. Do you think some more courses should be included?

- a. Yes
- b. No

20. Do you find that the courses you received created excellent opportunity for self employment?

- a. Yes
- b. No

21. Did you have any previous experience before participating this course?

- a. Yes
- b. No



22. How would you rate the support and resources provided by the LEDP in helping you achieve your learning and earning goals?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Bad
- e. Poor

23. Were the course materials and resources helpful in your learning journey?

- a. Yes
- b. No

24. Were the teachers helpful during the courses?

- a. Yes
- b. No

25. Quality of the teachers throughout the courses?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Bad
- e. Poor

26. How was the class duration?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Bad
- e. Poor

27. Do you think any changes should be added?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Your comment.....



28. Were you able to acquire new skills improve existing ones through the LEDP?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
29. Did you have a laptop/ computer before doing the course?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
30. If not, how did you manage the training and after of it?
- a) Borrowed laptop/computer from friend/relative.
 - b) Purchased laptop/computer.
 - c) Shared laptop/computer with other trainee.
 - d) Others
31. Do you know that the best two trainees in each batch are awarded with Laptop?
- i Yes
 - ii No
32. Did you able to receive the laptop awarded as efficient trainee in your batch?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
33. Quality of their teaching equipments?
- a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Bad
 - e. Poor
34. Do they offer any financial assistance?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
35. Did you get any transportation facilities?



- a. Yes
- b. No

36. Do they provide any food/tiffin facility during the courses?

- a. Yes
- b. No

37. Do they provide any dormitory accommodation?

- a. Yes
- b. No

38. Was the expenses of the courses affordable for you?

- a. Yes
- b. No

39. Your overall satisfaction with training provided by LEDP?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Bad
- e. Poor

40. Has your participation in the LEDP led to improved job prospects or career opportunities?

- a. Yes
- b. No

41. Did you experience any changes in your employment status after LEDP?

- a. Yes
- b. No

42. Have you seen an increase in your earnings as a result of the skills and knowledge gained from the training?

- a. Yes
- b. No

43. Your monthly income before?.....taka

44. Your monthly income after receiving training from LEDP?.....taka



45. Have you noticed any improvements in your socio-economic status since completing the training?
- Yes
 - No
46. Have there been any changes in your family's living conditions since the income increased?
- Yes
 - No
47. Have the increased financial resources helped in the educational opportunities for your family members (younger sister/brother)?
- Yes
 - No
48. Has the income helped in your family's access to healthcare facilities, health insurance or overall well-being?
- Yes
 - No
49. Have your leisure activities, travel or other non-essential expenditure increased?
- Yes
 - No
50. Has the income increase allowed you or your family to save or invest in new ways?
- Yes
 - No
51. How do you see the changes in your family after receiving training?
- Excellent
 - Very Good
 - Good
 - Bad
 - Poor
52. Has the increased income helped in your family's debt situation?
- Yes
 - No



53. Has the increased income contributed to greater financial stability?
- Yes
 - No
54. How do you see your financial conditions after the training you received?
- Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Bad
 - Poor
55. Do you established any firm or working under someone?
- I do
 - Working under someone
56. How many people are working with you? (If yes)
57. Do you think the government should arrange more opportunities like LEDP?
- Yes
 - No
58. Do you think LEDP helps the country to solve unemployment problem?
- Yes
 - No
59. Do you think LEDP playing a significant role in improving the status of rural women?
- Yes
 - No
60. What is your opinion about LEDP creating more job fields?
- Excellent
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Bad
 - Poor
61. Would you recommend the training to others?
- Yes



b. No

62. How do you see LEDP as an opportunity for youth?

- a. Excellent
- b. Very good
- c. Good
- d. Bad
- e. Poor

63. Do you recommend to renew this training in next phase?

- i Yes
- ii No

64. Training of how many days would be effective?

65. Do you suggest to include more courses in this training?

- i Yes
- ii No

66. Do you suggest to increase the number of trainees in next phase?

- i Yes
- ii No

67. Do you prefer online or physical training?

- i Online training
- ii Physical training

68. Do you face any problem to withdraw your dollar from your account?

- i Yes
- ii No
- iii Not applicable

69. Have you joined the job fair arranged by LEDP in your district?



i Yes

ii No

70. Have you got your training certificate?

i Yes

ii No

71. If not received, then why?



Annexure-4

KII Checklists

Learning & Earning Development Project (LEDP)

Key Informant Interview (KII)

Name of the Key Informant:

Designation of the Key Informant:

1. How does ICT Ministry/Division align with broader national strategies to leverage freelancing for economic growth and innovation? Have you observed any notable shifts in government policies related to freelancing in recent years?
2. What support mechanisms or resources does ICT division/ LEDP provide to freelancers to ensure their success and well-being? How does your organization address the unique challenges freelancers may face, such as access to benefits and professional development?
3. How does your division or ministry gather feedback from freelancers, and how is this feedback utilized for process improvement? Can you share an example where feedback from freelancers led to positive changes within your LEDP project?
4. What role does stakeholder engagement play in the success of LEDP project? What initiatives did ICT division /LEDP take to engage freelancing related stakeholders?
5. Are there initiatives to ensure fair opportunities for freelancers from diverse backgrounds and communities in LEDP project? How do you navigate gender-



related challenges in the freelancing industry, and what advice would you give to women starting their freelancing careers?

6. Have you faced any challenges in implementing LEDP project? Can you share challenges encountered and lessons learned during such transitions?
7. From your perspective, how do you envision the future of freelancing in Bangladesh? Based on your experiences, do you suggest that LEDP project should be extended for 2nd phase?
8. What are the strengths, weakness, opportunity and threats of LEDP project?
9. Do you suggest that training on advanced courses (like data analysis software SPSS, programming language etc.) should be included in the 2nd phase? Will that increase scope and earnings of our freelancers?
10. Do you take any initiative to solve the problems of freelancers (like weak internet connectivity, problem in receiving payment etc.)? If yet not, then in future do you have any such plan/initiative?
11. How does your organization recognize and reward outstanding contributions by freelancers?

THANK YOU



Annexure-5

FGD Checklists

Learning & Earning Development Project (LEDP)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

1. How did you decide to start freelancing, and what motivated you to explore this career path?
2. How do you come up with new and different ideas for your freelance work? Can you share a time when trying something different helped you succeed?
3. Do you focus on being really good at one thing in your freelance work, or do you try to learn and do many different things to get more clients?
4. How do you make sure you know about the newest things happening in freelancing? Has doing new things helped you get more jobs?
5. Why is it important to have good relationships with the people you work for? Can you tell a story about a time when you and a client became friends?
6. Freelancing can sometimes be hard on your schedule. How do you make sure you have enough time for yourself and your personal life while working as a freelancer?
7. What challenges did you face when creating your freelancer profile, and how did you overcome them?
8. Can you share your experiences in finding your first freelancing project and the hurdles you encountered?
9. How do you manage time effectively as a beginner freelancer, especially when juggling multiple projects?
10. What communication challenges have you experienced with clients, and how do you navigate language barriers?



11. Can you provide tips for new freelancers on building a professional and trustworthy profile for clients?
12. Platforms did you find most helpful when starting your freelancing journey?
13. Have you faced any challenges in understanding project requirements, and how do you clarify uncertainties with clients?
14. What role has networking played in your early freelancing experiences, and how did you approach it as a beginner?
15. How do you cope with rejection or unsuccessful proposals, and what lessons have you learned from such experiences?
16. What criteria should freelancers consider when choosing a marketplace for their services?
17. How do you navigate competition on popular freelancing platforms to stand out and secure projects?
18. How do you evaluate the terms and conditions of a marketplace to ensure they align with your freelancing goals and preferences?
19. How do you stay informed about trends in job demand to position yourself for high-paying opportunities?
20. What strategies do you employ to diversify your skills and offerings in response to changes in job demand?
21. How do you balance pursuing top-paying jobs with considering projects that align with your passion and interests?
22. How do freelancers stay ahead of the curve in industries that are rapidly evolving or expanding?
23. What resources or networks have you found helpful for staying informed about emerging opportunities in growing industries?
24. How do you adapt your skill set to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry, and what advice do you have for freelancers looking to do the same?
25. How do you navigate gender-related challenges in the freelancing industry, and what advice would you give to women starting their freelance careers?



26. Have you encountered gender bias or stereotypes in client interactions, and how do you handle such situations professionally?
27. In your experience, how can women freelancers promote diversity and inclusivity within the freelancing community, and why is it important?
28. What are common red flags that indicate a potential scam when interacting with clients or job offers online?
29. How do you distinguish between legitimate freelance platforms and those that may be fraudulent or pose risks to freelancers?
30. Can you provide tips on setting up secure payment methods and avoiding scams related to financial transactions in freelancing?
31. What key elements should be included in a well-crafted cover letter to make a strong first impression on potential employers?
32. Can you share tips for tailoring a cover letter to a specific job application and showcasing relevant skills and experiences?
33. What common mistakes should job seekers avoid when writing a cover letter, and how can these errors impact their chances of securing an interview?
34. How do you initiate effective communication with a new client to establish a positive and professional relationship from the start?
35. How do you handle challenging or unclear client instructions, and what steps do you take to seek clarification without causing misunderstandings?
36. Can you provide tips for maintaining regular and transparent communication throughout the duration of a project, and how does this contribute to client satisfaction?



