BECOME AN ONLINE FREELANCING CHAMPION

Conquering the digital market in Dadaab

Supported by:

Government of the Netherlands
Do you have what it takes to become a digital entrepreneur?

The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) aim to support youth to become online freelancers. Through the Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (RESI), youth have access to training and support services. Once trained, ITC and NRC supports youth to access online platforms where they can bid for jobs, earn income and develop their own online freelance business.
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With a computer, a good internet connection, hard work and motivation, you can work as an online freelancer for businesses around the world. Thanks to the internet, businesses can now hire people - online freelancers - across the globe for numerous small and big jobs. From administrative assistants, to translators and graphic designers, hiring someone online is just a few clicks away.

What does it mean to be an online freelancer?
• You are not employed by one specific company in one specific job. You work for different clients from all sources.
• You sell your skills and completes jobs digitally – generally through an online platform/website.
• It is like owning a business, you work for yourself, managing your own time, schedule and client list.

How do online freelancers get jobs?
Certain websites specialize in connecting businesses to online freelancers around the world. There are hundreds of online freelancing platforms, but the most popular are: Upwork, Freelancer, Fiverr and Guru.

But are there enough online jobs?
Yes! Every day, businesses posts thousands of new jobs on these platforms – looking for people to complete data entry, translation, social media, research and many other types of services. Currently, over 5 million companies are posting approximately 250,000 paid jobs each month on more than 150 online freelancing portals.

So how does this work?
Online freelancers have to create profiles on these websites with a professional profile picture, a description of their work experience and skillsets and their average hourly rate. The benefit of being an online freelancer means you can work and get paid no matter where you live or what your status is.

Are you ready to start?
Can you become a champion online freelancer?

Being an online freelancer is one of the best jobs in the world! You choose your own hours, work from wherever you like, choose your own clients, and earn money.

But being an online freelancer is also one of the hardest jobs out there! As a freelancer, you will face fierce competition. You will not see income right away. During the first few months, you need to gain lots of experience, find motivation to apply to many jobs, establish a personal brand and a good online reputation. That is a lot! You will experience rejection, which can be difficult. Some days you might even think, “Why am I doing this?”

It is true! You will need to overcome many challenges!

So what do you need to become a champion online freelancer? In short, you will need:

- Lots of hard work
- Discipline
- Motivation
- Patience
- A support network
- New skills

The hardest part of online freelancing is that your success depends on you! The amount of time and work you invest affects your final earning and growth.
The Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative (RESI) is a project developed by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to train and support refugees and their host communities in online freelancing.

RESI has created a programme to train new online freelancers and support them to kickstart their online careers through training, mentorship and market connections.

RESI acts like a guide to support new freelancers on their online journey – equipping them with knowledge and tips to become successful. RESI also helps freelancers navigate the difficulties of the online freelancing world – from doing job interviews to avoiding scammers.

RESI support to online freelancers in Dadaab
RESI exists to help you become a successful online freelancer! So how can RESI help?
Through RESI, you have:

- Opportunity to join tailored training programmes
- Opportunity to access digital coworking spaces
- Opportunity to get continued mentorship and coaching
- Opportunity to connect to online freelancing platforms
- Opportunity to apply to the “Dadaab Collective Freelance Agency”
- Opportunity to apply to Freelancing Kickstart Grant

**a. Vocational training programmes**

Skills are key to be a successful freelancer!

Active and new freelancers can apply to join one of RESI’s training programmes. In 2019, RESI will offer three vocational training programmes to introduce new students to online freelancing and expand the digital skillsets of active online freelancers.

**RESI VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES**

**Computer Secretariat II & III**
**Objective:** Learn basic to advanced computer applications
Dadaab | Hagadera | IFO | Hagadera

**Graphic Design and Web Development**
**Objective:** Learn how to become graphic designers and web developers
Dadaab | Hagadera | IFO | Hagadera

**Introduction to Online Freelancing**
**Objective:** Discover the world of online freelancing and become a successful freelancer
**Delivered by:** Samasource Digital Basics
Dadaab

Want to join the next training? Contact:
Dakane Bare | dakane.bare@nrc.no
b. Coworking spaces

A safe and comfortable place to work makes a big difference!

RESI makes available to freelancers four spaces equipped with high capacity fibre internet and desktop computers with webcams and headsets. Ambitious freelancers and entrepreneurs can use the coworking spaces to:

1. **Learn new skills**: access e-learning activities, complete school work and research etc.;
2. **Work, work, work**: carry out online freelancing activities: (apply for jobs, do online interviews, complete freelance assignments) and complete other digital jobs and use desk space for work activities;
3. **Organise and hold meetings**: entrepreneurship and/or business groups; self-help groups and other forms of collectives may use the spaces to meet, complete activities and house activities or carry out work

The Dadaab and Hagadera spaces may also be used to host events upon approval by NRC.

c. Mentorship and coaching

Nothing like learning from the pros!

After having completed the online freelancing training, RESI organizes mentorship and coaching programmes to help freelancers build confidence by being practically exposed to the online freelancing world. RESI coaches and mentors also help active freelancers navigate the complex world of online freelancing to keep growing their businesses.

Mentorship and coaching includes:

1. Workshops with already successful freelancers and life skills coaches;
2. A dedicated team of coaches supporting applying for jobs, communicating with clients and interview preparation;
3. An growing online freelancing community on Facebook and WhatsApp to share tips, ideas, links, jobs, provide support and feedback and interact with the other online freelancers.

d. Connection to online freelancing platforms

No clients, no fun!

ITC and NRC have established a partnership with Upwork, the world’s leading freelancing platform, to support freelancers in Dadaab kickstart their careers on the platform. The Upwork Social Impact teaches best practices on how to build the best profile and be a successful freelancer using the platform.

RESI COWORKING SPACES in DADAAB
Opening hours: 09:00 - 16:00
Locations:
1 (one) co-working space in Dadaab
1 (one) co-working space in Hagadera
1 (one) computer room in IFO
1 (one) computer room in Dagahale

Want to access the space contact:
James Wang’anya | james.sifuna@nrc.no

Want to join the community?
Join the Dadaab Freelancing WhatsApp and Facebook Groups!

Dadaab Online Freelancers
Send a request to
+254 721 821373

‘Upwork’s mission is to create economic opportunities so people have better lives. We believe great talent should have access to great opportunities, regardless of the community in which they live.’

Elizabeth Tse, Senior Vice-President for Operations at Upwork
e. The Dadaab Collective Freelance Agency

Freelancers in Dadaab have the opportunity to join the Dadaab Collective Freelance Agency on Upwork. The agency unites online freelancers from Dadaab and supports them to expand their professional experience and improve their profile by building their portfolio of successfully completed jobs. This is done by identifying potential clients and bidding for larger jobs that require a group to complete them.

To join the Agency, you need to apply and go through a competitive selection process. Luckily applications take place on a regular basis! The Agency is looking for motivated and reliable freelancers that can demonstrate an aptitude to work as part of a coordinated team.

Not yet a member of the Dadaab Collective Freelance Agency?
Submit your application today!
To submit your application, contact:
Sam Okello | samuel.okello@nrc.no

f. Freelancing Career Development Package

To support motivated, engaged and successful freelancers to expand their activities, RESI gives graduates of trainings the opportunity to apply to Career Development Packages that include technical support and equipment to productively engage in freelancing.

The Package is currently available to freelancers who have graduated from the RESI online freelancing training, are active members of the Dadaab Collective Freelance Agency. In addition you have to meet the following conditions:

• Have completed the online freelancing training with evidence of 90% attendance
• Have participated in the mentorship sessions with a recorded attendance of at least 90%
• Have an active account on Upwork (other online freelancing platforms can be taken into account)
• Show that you have sought remote support from trainers and other freelancers
• Show that you regularly improve your profile on Upwork (at least on a monthly basis) and is actively bidding for jobs

To apply, you will need to submit a motivation letter about your future career plans with a clear indication of how you plan to use the equipment and other support provided by the program.
The 8 pillars of online freelancing

PILLAR 1: 
Learn about online freelancing

The first step to become an online freelancer is to learn about online freelancing: how it works, what platforms to use and what type of jobs exist.

Understanding the world of online freelancing will help you define your freelancing goals. You will have to decide if you want to freelance full-time, or just to earn extra income, if you want to specialize in specific jobs and how to identify clients.

The internet is a great place to find video tutorials, online courses, eBooks and webinars to learn more about online freelancing, how to create your profile, how to find jobs and clients, how to submit and manage proposals, how to set payment methods, etc. Many platforms offer free information and some offer paid courses to help you develop your online freelancing career.

PILLAR 2: 
Find the right platform for you

If you’re just starting out, maybe you’re wondering where online job opportunities are. Freelancing platforms, match clients with workers that have their desired skillset. Over 150 online freelancing platforms exist, and you need to find the one which matches your skills and profile.

Upwork is a good starting point. With over 1.5 million clients, Upwork offers something for every type of freelancer. It accommodates both short- and long-term projects, hourly or per-project work and expert-level and entry-level engagements. Regardless of where you are in your career, Upwork is likely to have something for you. But you can try different platforms and see which one you prefer.
PILLAR 1: Learn about online freelancing
PILLAR 2: Find the right platform for you
PILLAR 3: Find a comfortable and well equipped place to work
PILLAR 4: Constantly upgrade your skillset
PILLAR 5: Connect to mentors and a support network
PILLAR 6: Build your freelancer personal brand
PILLAR 7: Build your professional portfolio
PILLAR 8: Expand your freelancing career, join an agency
PILLAR 3:
Find a comfortable and well equipped place to work

With a computer and a stable internet connection, an online freelancer can work from anywhere in the world. Across the globe, many freelancers work from home or from freelancing hubs, coworking spaces, coffee shops, computer labs or community spaces.

PILLAR 4:
Constantly upgrade your skillset

In freelancing, you are competing against the world and competition is high. More than 2 million freelancers are bidding in real time for client projects. To stand out from the crowd, improving and adapting your skills is essential to find jobs.

Taking an online e-learning course is a fantastic way to learn and master a new skill and even introduce you to a new network of people. There are hundreds of online platforms offering free courses. Some courses offer certifications which you can add to your online profile.

e-Learning with CodersTrust

CodersTrust has a ‘learn and earn’ platform which allows you to learn new knowledge to support you getting higher level jobs. You can pay a small fee to access their e-learning portals (Codeschool and Codeacademy), 24/7 online support, weekly live classes and access to career advisors. Freelancers can also apply for finance to fund their CodersTrust learning programme.

Rezarta Aliraj upgraded her online freelancing profile through the CodersTrust learn and earn platform.

It is useful to find a place to work where you can access basic equipment and can be in a calm environment. At a minimum, you will need a good computer with a webcam, a headset and a reliable access to good internet and power supply.

Your workspace and equipment can massively impact your productivity, focus, and motivation. So you need to find a suitable place once you decide to start freelancing.

Other platforms include:

Lynda.com is an online learning platform with videos taught by experts in software, creative and business skills.

Udemy is an online learning platform aimed at adults allowing students to follow classes and also become instructors.

Coursera is an online learning platform founded in 2012 which offers academic inspired courses to complete degrees.

Zeqr is an online learning platform with experts sharing their knowledge with users through videos and consultations.
1. Treat freelancing as a business.

2. Showcase your work portfolio.

3. Re-skill: The internet is full of educative courses. Change with the ever-changing future workforce and boost your career.

4. Invest in your freelance business.

5. Create an online presence (personal website, blog & social media.)

Aden, Online freelancing mentor

- Evaluate client information, make sure they are legitimate.
- Bid for jobs under the category of your skillset.
- Post a portfolio in your profile, to showcase your skills, but make sure you have the authorization from the client.
- Research skills required to complete certain tasks quickly and efficiently online.
- Learn to say no if you are invited to write a proposal on a project you have zero skills in

Henry, Freelance Agency Manager, Samasource Digital Basics

- One should believe that they can be just as successful as any other professional freelancer. By doing this one will have the energy and the self-motivation that will drive them to be who they wish to be.
- Be around people that inspire you to be successful and encourage you to do the necessary things that determine your success.

Mohamed, Online Freelancer

1. Create a good profile

2. Understand the online freelancing platform rules

3. Team up with other freelancers for advice and to learn more

4. Have patience. Success is the result of hard work!

Ali, Online Freelancer
As a freelancer, you need to operate like a business. However, this does not mean that you need to work alone all the time.

When you build your freelance career it is important to find a mentor that can help you grow as a freelancer and achieve your goals. An online freelancing mentor should know how to become a successful freelancer, and can share their tips, suggestions, stories and lessons with you. Your friends and colleagues working as online freelancers can also be a good support network to give mentorship, motivation and advice.

How to find mentorship?

• **Use your local network**: the most traditional way to find a mentor is by tapping into your local networks and connections. Your mentor could be a local entrepreneur or a successful freelancer that you know. Don’t be shy to reach out and ask for help.

• **Connect to mentors online**: many online platforms exist to find and connect with other amazing freelancers that make digital mentorship easy.

• **Join online freelance communities**: Immerse yourself in the online freelancing world and the possibilities for amazing connections with other freelancers are endless. Platforms such as Quora and reddit are packed with freelancing discussions and groups.

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<th>Join freelancer groups</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Digital Freelancer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How about joining digitalfreelancer.io? Digital Freelancer is a community of independent business owners. The website gives you access to community discussions, tools, guides, and other resources that power some of the most successful freelance businesses on the web.</td>
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<td><strong>MicroMentor</strong></td>
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<td>Free community of entrepreneurs and volunteer business mentors. <a href="http://www.micromentor.org">www.micromentor.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>Skillshare</strong></td>
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<td>With e-learning courses, you can learn new information and find mentors and connect to other online freelancers. Skillshare can help find mentors. Browse their courses and see what teachers in your field seem like a good fit and send them a message saying you would love to chat. <a href="http://www.skillshare.com">www.skillshare.com</a></td>
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<th>Join networking platforms</th>
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<td>LinkedIn is well known for making professional contacts, but Twitter is also an amazing resource. Follow people whose work you like and start engaging with their content. Comment, retweet. After a while, send them a private message asking if they could have a quick Skype chat or be your mentor.</td>
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PILLAR 6:
Build your freelancer personal brand

Building your personal brand can help make you stand out as a freelancer online and with your clients. You need to decide if you prefer to use your name or create a business name for yourself.

You can complete your personal brand through your social media accounts or even a personalized website with a name, logo, portfolio and testimonials.

Branding yourself will make you stand out from other freelancers in your field, showcase your professionalism, and helps promotes your services and find more freelance jobs.

PILLAR 7:
Build your portfolio

The most important part of freelancing is building a portfolio and a solid client base. When you start your freelance career, you will spend a lot of time applying for jobs and marketing yourself to clients.

As you get more jobs, you will build your portfolio – a bit like a catalogue of all your experience, past jobs, client testimonies and a presentation of your skills and services. A good portfolio is key to attracting more clients as it shows you are capable of completing jobs to a high level and that they can trust you.

When you get your first job, it is essential to make sure your client is 100% satisfied. As your next client will judge you based on client testimonies from your past jobs. If finding a first paying client online is difficult, working for free is a great way to build your portfolio, jumpstart your freelance career, and interest potential clients into giving your services a chance. Just don’t forget to ask for referrals and testimonials to build your profile!

Reviews don’t have to come from paying clients. Anyone in your personal or professional network you’ve worked with can testify to your skills and work ethic. Contact professors, past employers or colleagues, or mentors and ask if they will leave you a review.
**PILLAR 8:**
Expand your freelancing career, join an agency

Now you have jumpstarted your freelancing career, it is time to grow! As you grow, you will see that there are ways to work collaboratively with online freelancing colleagues to get bigger and better jobs.

Freelancers can stand out by joining a freelancing agency. Agencies search for jobs and assemble teams of freelancers to complete the job. For a small fee paid by the freelancer, the agency manages the client relationship. Platforms such as Upwork allow freelancers to work together under an agency.

You can also partner with a freelancer who is capable of delivering work that meets the standards of both you and your client to look for jobs together. Together – or in a group – you can combine your skillsets to apply for different jobs.
“I never missed a class of the mentorship workshop. It was really very beneficial. One of the big things I learnt was how to manage stress, how to plane and manage my time and how to use different applications such as Adobe Photoshop and the Microsoft Office Suite.”

- Mohamed, Online Freelancer
For more information, please contact:

Refugee Employment and Skills Initiative

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