



# Gender Gap Analysis GSG Freelance Academy

2020



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## Introduction

Although income earnings might differ from one participant to another for individualized and specific reasons, there is an obvious trend in the income disparity between the two genders, with males earning almost 1.5x more than females in some cases among participants of the Freelance Academy (FLA) in Gaza. This gap is noted within and across specializations, despite similar education and technical abilities and having been provided the same level of training and resources by Gaza Sky Geeks (GSG). The aim of this report, therefore, is to ascertain what other factors may be driving this disparity and whether any programmatic changes or other interventions could be implemented to arrest this.

We are firmly committed and continue to drive gender inclusivity and equality in all of our programs; this should not just include equity in participation but also attempting to address inequalities in the outcomes achieved, which is most starkly shown by the pay gap which may be affected not only by systemic issues (noting the global phenomenon of this gap<sup>1</sup>) but also by factors within the project's to control.

As a first step, the following report assesses trends more thoroughly within and specific to GSG's FLA based in Gaza. Some sections will mostly cover data collected from Cohort 1 through Cohort 12; however, in some parts it will cover only specific cohorts given the available data. We do, however, believe that the findings here can be extended to other programs and efforts by GSG in growing an inclusive tech sector within Palestine (and globally<sup>2</sup>).

In the analysis we cover the income profiles of females and males at the start, end of, and post-program. Moreover, we distinguish between those continuing to earn an income and those who cease freelancing post-program. In attempts to measure the commitment level of females and males and their availability to carry out freelance work and its effect on income levels, given our existing data, three things were studied: employment status (baseline survey), attendance in sessions, and hours spent on freelancing-related activities (endline survey).

Key findings from the report include:

- A gender pay gap as high as 56% exists, most acutely at the start of the freelancers' careers
- While incomes rise over time, and at a faster rate for females, the gap persists
- Commitment levels and hours spent freelancing is comparable, at times higher for females
- Average hourly rates for females can be 20 - 60% less than those of males
- Number of females (relative to males) not earning an income increases after six months

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<sup>1</sup> <https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/>

<sup>2</sup> Whilst ambitious and local context is important, we do note that certain findings would be generalisable to other geographies and economic sectors

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## **1.0 Gender Gap x GSG FLA**

### **1.1 Income Data Points**

For the purpose of this report, an “Income Data Point” is defined as each individual point we collect information from a participant during and post-program relating to their income. The optimal number of income data points to be collected from each participant of the FLA is six; income at baseline, income earned immediately after the program, and then at four quarterly follow-ups (three months, six months, nine months, and 12 months) during the next year.

For the 12 completed cohorts in Gaza’s FLA we have collected 2,035 of a potential total 2,454 data points (83%). Based upon this, we are comfortable that a sufficient number of data points exist for this analysis, noting however that the reliability, quality and depth of data improves for later cohorts. This is a result of GSG becoming more sophisticated and well-resourced in this area and as a data-driven / evidenced based methodology becomes central to its decision making. Conversely, the ability to collect reliable and quality data points diminishes over time for each cohort as data collection becomes more difficult and response rates decline.

## 1.2 Top-level income numbers

Below are the Top-level Numbers for FL Gaza Cohorts 1 through 12 as of March 2020:

Total Income Generated: \$2,023,301 Total Participants: 668	
Total Income Generated by Males: \$1,211,851 (60%)  Total Male Participants: 291 (44%)	Total Income Generated by Females: \$811,450 (40%)  Total Female Participants: 377 (56%)
Average Income (3-month period): \$1,440	
Males: \$1,927	Females: \$1,046 (gap of \$881, 46%)
Median Income (3-month period): \$753	
Males: \$1,000	Females: \$550 (gap of \$450, 45%)

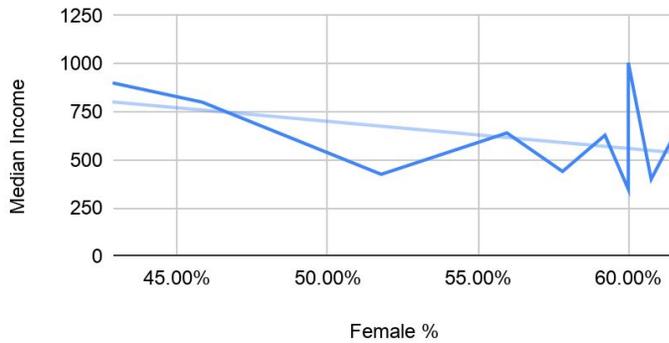
*Note: Median and average numbers presented throughout the report reflect a three-month period.*

As can be seen, females make up almost 60% of the FLA Gaza cohort participants, but only earn 40% of total income. Significant gaps are noted in the average and median incomes, driving the genesis of this analysis and starkly reflected in the below graphs.

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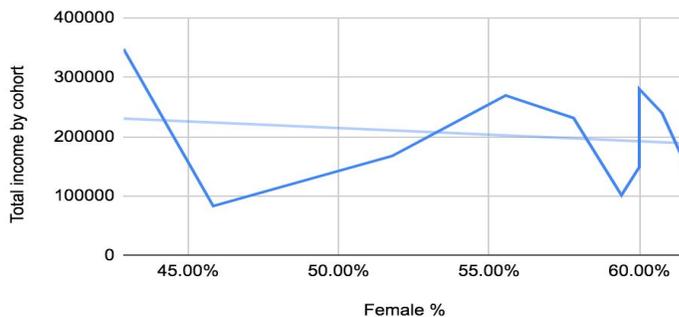
**Chart 1: Relationship between the percentage of females in a cohort, vs. the median income of that cohort:**

Female % vs. Median Cohort Income



**Chart 2: Relationship between the percentage of females in a cohort vs. the total income of that cohort:**

Total income by cohort vs. Female %



This worrying trend reflects not only the pay gap but also impacts overall cohort results, as the increase in female participation rates with a relatively lower median income will decrease the total income, causing a decline compared to prior cohorts. It also helps to explain a portion (along with other reasons) of the low income earned in the pilot Nablus program, which had the highest percentage of females of any cohort to date (88%).

Importantly however, given GSG's aim to foster changes to gender equality, it will look to respond to the call and challenge for it to equalize the gender pay gap as one method for addressing this.

### 1.3 Performance of FLA past cohorts

Follow-up period surveys not only show if a graduate continues to earn an income post-program but also their performance over time.

Do they still have the same level of commitment? Are they able to secure higher-paying jobs or a higher number of jobs? Are they more experienced and thus earning more? And finally, do females' performance differ from that of their male counterparts<sup>3</sup>?

**Table 1: Median income for each three-month period disaggregated by gender, along with the income data points collected for each follow-up period for females and males for Cohorts 1 to 7.**

Follow Up	Median		Gap (M - F)	Data Point Collected for Each period	
	Males	Females		Males	Females
<b>Endline</b>	805	351	\$454 (56%)	165	207
<b>3 months</b>	995	580	\$415 (42%)	114	136
<b>6 months</b>	1400	635	\$765 (55%)	75	90
<b>9 months</b>	1526.5	1010	\$516.5 (34%)	58	69
<b>12 months</b>	2040	1500	\$540 (26%)	57	51

*Note: Here the analysis includes cohorts who completed at least three follow up periods.*

As the table above shows, females and males earn a higher income as we reach the 12-month follow-up mark based primarily on increased freelancing experience, improved portfolios of past work, and technical capability. Positively, we note that female incomes increase at a higher rate than those of their male counterparts; however, they do not reach male income levels and overall the gap continues to persist in each of the follow-up periods

With respect to the Income Data Points, and as noted above, as we move away from the end-line period, data collected decreases due to reduced response rates this means that the data become less representative and reliable. Importantly however, the income data points collected are fairly consistent across females and males, thus allowing inferences to be made for both genders.

<sup>3</sup> Note: Here the analysis include those who are earning income (>\$0), individuals who weren't able to earn income are discussed later (p.15)

The information above reflects an overview of the performance of all cohorts collectively. If we were to see the behaviour of females and males in follow-up periods for each cohort separately, cohort charts below can help us do so.

**Table 3: This table shows the median income in the different follow-up periods for Males in each FLA cohort**

<b>Males</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9&amp;10</b>	<b>11&amp;12</b>
Endline	1800	325	1253	400	500	1500	805	970	829	630
3 months	1507	1150	1300	1000	1325	700	800	1813	635	
6 months	3500		1200	600	1090	830	1600			
9 month		2400	1125	2000		1300	2000			
12 months	2800	1350	2600	1423	1975					

**Table 4: Median income in the different follow-up periods for females in each FLA cohort**

<b>Females</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9&amp;10</b>	<b>11&amp;12</b>
Endline	425	250	700	324	192.5	250	327	430	620	700
3 months	500	1755	900	350	500	850	353	715	1000	
6 months	1177		620	540	756	750	400			
9 month		1890	1405	450		1550	1050			
12 months	1850	1500	1900	1215	1350					

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Translating the cohorts charts above, overall income data points collected for those who earn income higher than zero suggest that both females and males earn a higher income as time passes almost along the same trend. There were, however, select cases of those who reported a declining income over time.

	<b>Reporting an increase</b>	<b>Reporting a decrease</b>
<b>Females</b>	<b>56.41%</b>	<b>39.74%</b>
<b>Males</b>	<b>52.75%</b>	<b>45.05%</b>

The percentage of females who reported a decrease in income is lower than the percentage of males, which may indicate that either females are improving or maintaining a baseline, albeit lower than their male counterparts. However, critically the increased percentage of income still does not lessen the gap between the two. Therefore, if GSG were to address the gap which exists for past graduates, this may take the form of targeting females who saw a decrease in income - segmenting by specialization.<sup>4</sup>

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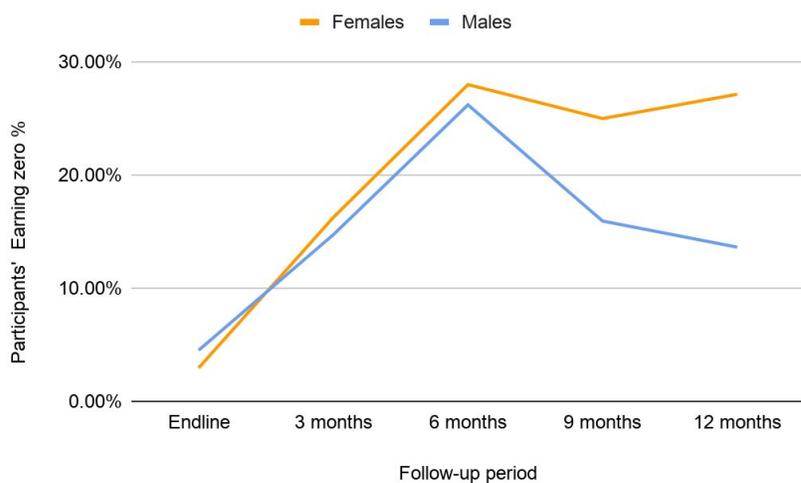
<sup>4</sup> Note that any intervention which applies to both genders would be equally implemented.

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## 1.4 FLA participants Earning Zero

Both females and males reported zero income levels from freelancing.

**Chart 3: Percentage of females and males earning \$0 at each follow-up period**



The percentage of females earning no income from freelancing is almost equal to male percentages in the endline, three-month and six-month follow-up surveys; however, after nine and 12 months, the gap increases significantly.

Some of those who reported a \$0 income from freelancing are now full-time employees but most are unemployed. Once again, a gender gap exists, with 70% of females unemployed compared to 46% for males. Others reported that they were either employed full-time, part-time, working on their start-ups, or had joined GSG's Code Academy, etc.

This raises three core questions for our program teams and potential interventions:

1. Is it worth reinvesting in training / workshops for those who reported a decrease in income or \$0 income and are still unemployed?
2. If we were to target both (earning zero and reporting a decrease in income), would the training and workshops for each group be different? If yes, how so?
3. What are the drivers? Are participants getting married, having kids, and therefore unable to work? This would require a different intervention than if they are losing motivation or need increased training and support. Focus groups to help answer these questions will be held in the near future.

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## 1.5 Are males more committed than females?

In an attempt to measure the commitment level of females and males and their availability to engage in freelance work, given our existing data, three things were studied:

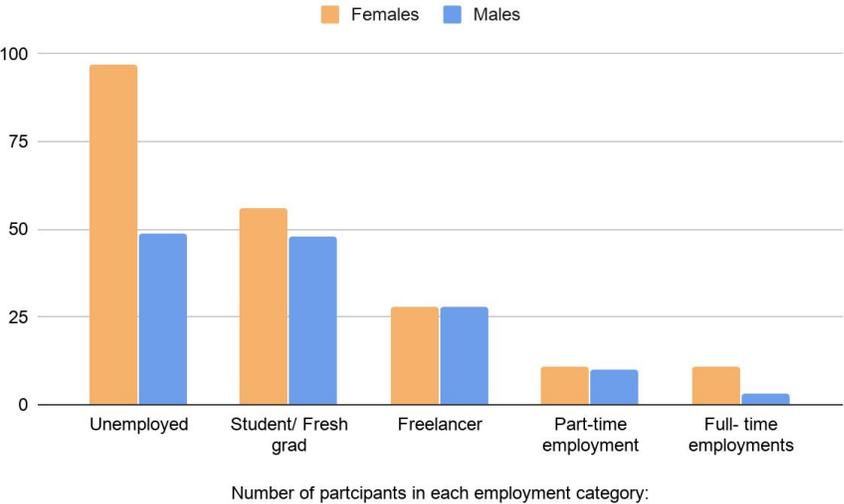
- 1. Employment status (baseline survey)
- 2. Attendance in sessions
- 3. Hours spent on FL (endline survey)

These three points were studied for Cohorts 6 to 12 only based on availability of data.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.5.1 Employment status

Being employed (full-time or part-time) when entering the FLA program can either suggest that (a) a freelancer has less time to focus on freelancing and thus would earn less, or (b) that a freelancer is more experienced and could thus earn more on freelancing platforms.

**Chart 4: Number of participants in each employment category**



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<sup>5</sup> Participants = 354 (F: 208, M:146), income data points = 1,027

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**Table 5: Median FL income at end-line according to their employment status**

	<b>Median Females</b>	<b>Median Males</b>
<b>Unemployed</b>	\$371	\$750
<b>Student/ Fresh grad</b>	\$500	\$400
<b>Freelancer</b>	\$1,565	\$2,525
<b>Part-time employment</b>	\$220	\$1,540
<b>Full- time employment</b>	\$440	\$2,153

Three findings are inferred from the above:

1- The assumption that students with previous freelance experience earn a higher income than others once they come to the Freelance Academy appears true for both females and males, although not to the same degree.

2- Part-time and full-time female employees registered lower median incomes, suggesting that they may have to balance freelancing with other responsibilities, which may not be as true for males.

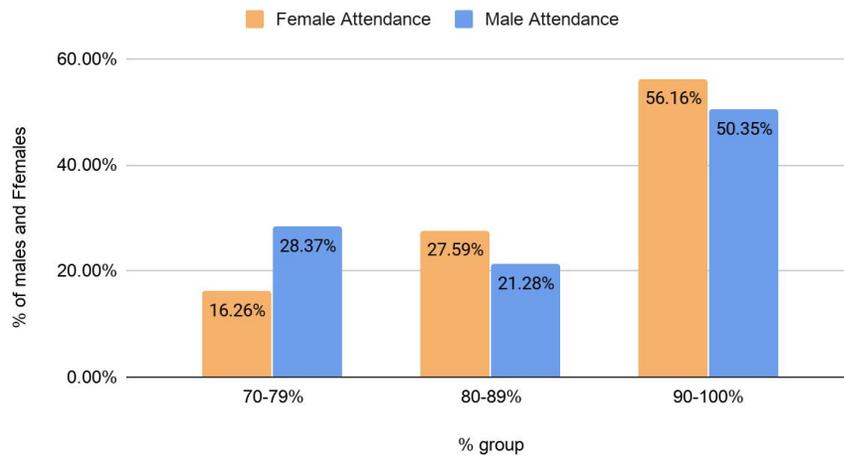
3- The number of female participants in these cohorts was higher than males (20%), most of whom were previously unemployed. Thus, a portion of the gender gap will result from the females starting from a relatively lower technical / experience base compared to males.

All of these findings were considered as part of, and informed the action items in Section 2.

## 1.5.2 Sessions' Attendance

Chart 5: Percentage of females and males attend 70 to 100% of all sessions:

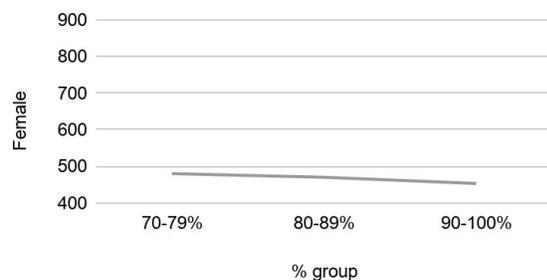
Female Attendance and Male Attendance



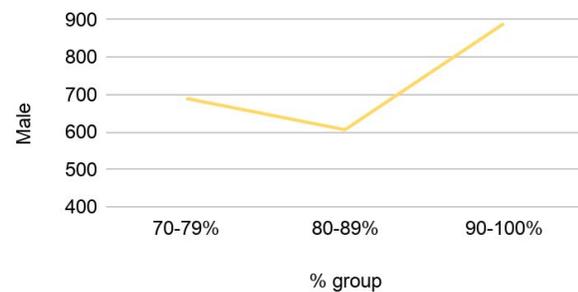
As above, this was studied for Cohorts 6 to 12.

Females are generally more committed to attending sessions than males. However, if we look at the median of income generated by females across the attendance percentages, it is almost equal; otherwise said, female participants' higher commitment to attending sessions does not result in increased incomes. Males, however, benefit from a higher degree of commitment to attending sessions as reflected in an increasing income curve, implying a correlation (though not necessarily causation) between commitment and income median.

Female vs. % group



Male vs. % group



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This raises the following questions:

How can the time spent in mentorship sessions be better utilized to increase females' performance? For example, should greater time be dedicated to applying and bidding for jobs? Should training be delivered differently for females and males? Looking at the hours spent on freelance activities in and out of the mentoring sessions will help to answer these questions and forms part of our follow up actions.

### 1.5.3 Hours spent on freelancing

Who spends more time on freelancing, females or males? When we asked graduates at the end-line how many hours per week they spent on freelance work, the answer differed between females and males as well as across specializations.<sup>6</sup>

The median hours females spent on freelancing on a weekly basis was 30 hours, while for males it was 33.75 hours - not a huge difference. If you look at the table below, you'll see the hours spent for males and females for each specialization. But do females and males of the same specialization spend the same amount of time on freelancing weekly?

**Table 6: Median hours and income spent by females and males by specialization**

	<b>Females' Median Hours per week</b>	<b>Males' Median Hours per Week</b>	<b>F Median Income</b>	<b>M Median Income</b>	<b>F Avg. Hourly Rate</b>	<b>M Avg. Hourly Rate</b>
<b>Development</b>	35	35	\$675	\$830	\$27	\$89
<b>UI/UX designer</b>	50	30	\$1,065	\$1,800	\$27	\$94
<b>Translations/ Content Writing</b>	32	38	\$346	\$520	\$36	\$30
<b>Graphic Design and Multimedia</b>	20	32	\$800	\$1,050	\$56	\$69

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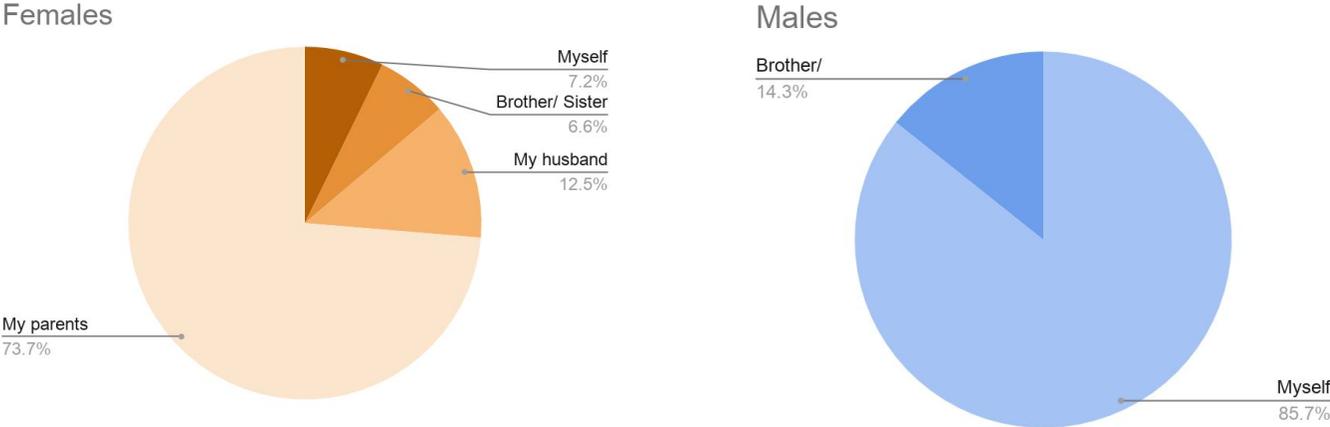
<sup>6</sup> Note: as above this metric is applied to Cohorts 6 through 12 only.

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The assumption that females spend fewer hours on freelancing is not borne out by the data above. This may reflect that the income gap is actually driven by one or a combination of the following factors: (a) technical skill gap leading to lower paid jobs, (b) lack of confidence/negotiation skills leading to lower relative rates, (c) females spending additional time on bids or losing bids (i.e. 'wasted effort') and (d) females taking on less complicated/lower earning jobs. Additionally, we note that this could (and likely) will also be driven by the disappointing fact that, globally, females will earn less than males for the same work performed (as shown by the [Global Gender Gap Report](#)). All of these are considered in the proposed interventions within Section 2.

### 1.6 Males are “Breadwinners”

When we asked our participants<sup>7</sup> who is the main family provider at baseline, the answers showed:



While 25% of males self-reported as the main providers for their household, this is true for only 7% of female participants. Moreover, females reported that almost 13% of their husbands are the main providers of the household, while none of the males reported that their wives were. This suggests that females may be less financially dependent on freelancing work than males and therefore less pressured to secure a greater number or increasingly complex jobs to sustain household incomes.

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<sup>7</sup> Cohorts 6 to 12 only.

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## 2.0 Lessons Learnt and Future Action Items

Based on the above findings and following multiple workshops and sessions with the program teams, staff, and senior management, GSG has formulated the below list of action points. These are driven by the results of the analysis, conclusions and hypothesis drawn from this, and reflect the potential ways GSG can adapt its programming to impact and address the underlying causes of the gender pay gap where these fall within the remit of factors that can be influenced by the program.

Recommendations regarding data collection:

- Data will be collected on the degree of unpaid work (in baseline, endline and the four follow up periods surveys) undertaken by both genders and in different familial contexts (married with or without children, and if with children, children's age; living with parents; etc.) to better understand and explore the impact this has on the ability of participants to complete the freelancing courses, post-program volunteerism, and number of hours available to seek employment opportunities (including the subsequent impact on income generation).
- Data will be collected on the complexity and technical demands of jobs secured by males and females with the same experience level for comparative purposes to determine whether (and if yes, what) additional support may be needed for female participants to succeed in more complex freelancing assignments and to put these measures in place.
- Data will be collected on the hours spent by freelancers on specific components of securing employment opportunities (searching, bidding, negotiating, job completion, etc) to determine the relative differences in focus by the genders and whether this has a deterministic effect on the income opportunities generated.
- Qualitative data will be collected from mentors and participants to more clearly elucidate the findings and fill any gaps in the quantitative data; for example, do mixed gender pairings have the same impact as same-gender pairings? Does the number of hours spent with mentors increase the likelihood of securing freelancing work? Does it create improvements in participants' self-esteem, confidence?
- GSG will collect qualitative data to understand why females drop out of freelance work but remain unemployed.
- GSG will complete a study of female and male freelancers about the factors they consider when determining hourly rates and identify any key differences which lead to under/overvaluation and the influence of job category, negotiation behaviors, and perceptions of ability.

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- GSG will complete a study as to whether female freelancers are receiving relatively fewer client reviews and what, if any, influence this has on their position in search rankings and their employability.

Recommendations and lessons learned for program teams and proposed interventions:

- GSG will adjust curricula and structure in a way that maximizes the additional hours already spent by females in class. This will take the form of both exploiting the high degree of motivation and commitment shown by participants by focusing on observed weak points (e.g. additional classes on bidding and negotiation) through additional workshops (a bidding bootcamp has been piloted and shown promising early results) as well as redirecting this time towards actively bidding and negotiating for jobs in the classroom setting with the support of other male and female participants, as well as mentors.
- GSG will fully integrate the Professional Skills Training within the Freelance Academy to ensure that these skills are an integral part of the program. Participants of the pilot showed an increase in their overall confidence, particularly in regards to negotiation and communicating with clients. GSG will pilot dividing participants into groups and pairs of both genders and assigning them different tasks to collaborate on. These tasks will be mostly mock job negotiations and completing a technical task so that participants can practice these skills and receive coaching from their peers and program coaches.
- GSG will develop a clear guideline setting out the expectations for minimum rates per job by complexity and experience level, creating transparency for female and male freelancers so they do not 'undervalue' themselves during negotiations.
- GSG will provide targeted and differentiated support for certain groups of participants who have been identified as more likely to face challenges in securing a sustainable income; for example, employment status at baseline has a significant effect on income achievements.
- GSG will design an intervention for female participants whose performance has dropped post-program, including specific training that addresses professional and technical skills, given that the income gap tends to increase nine and 12 months following graduation.
- GSG will provide a greater number of and invest more significantly in coaching sessions to support participants (both female and male) to manage workloads at home and in the process facilitate awareness-raising and behavioral change which encourages equitable sharing of responsibilities across genders. This will leverage lessons learned during COVID-19 restrictions and include 1:1 sessions with 'role models' to enable participants to benefit from peers and exchange experiences to remain motivated.

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- GSG will explore whether remote delivery is more suitable for female participants - particularly for those who have additional familial responsibilities and demands, as well as those who cannot attend in-person sessions due to timing/travel etc. and if so, increase the offerings for virtual courses.
  - GSG will identify ways post-program mentoring and volunteerism can be boosted for females graduates to provide current participants with an increased number of success stories, role models and case studies on how to succeed as a female freelancer. This will see a greater emphasis on female-female mentorship as well as building stronger connections between female participants and women's business associations and ensuring the mentorship curricula is suited to female mentees' needs.
  - GSG will pilot free or reduced-cost child care at the new Gaza City co-working space during peak periods. It is hoped that the availability of these services during the day and on location on an as-needed basis will facilitate greater opportunity for engagement from female participants.

#### Recommendations and lessons learned for the ecosystem:

- GSG will explore the potential to create a Palestinian 'glassdoor' which creates transparency for local freelancers and ecosystem actors on the rates which are being charged across the various platforms, specializations and degree of technical expertise/experience.
- GSG will explore the potential to create a Palestinian female freelancing 'union' or group which can represent and advocate for systemic improvements across the local ecosystem and globally.
- GSG will continue to advocate for financial inclusion and access for program participants. Limited financial inclusion and access is endemic to Palestine, affecting freelancers' ability to compete in and access global markets / platforms; this is recognized as impacting females to a higher degree.
- GSG will advocate for 'Freelancers' and 'Freelancing' to be considered valid employment categories by municipalities and authorities; this will benefit the ecosystem in general and in a number of administrative and logistical ways, and would likely be of more significant benefit for females.
- GSG will advocate for solutions which positively impact on gender equality with PITA and other ICT companies as well as in its other programmatic efforts