

Safrea on the freelance future of work. Are you ready?

 By Leigh Andrews

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Safrea's first-ever freelance media trends and income report, launched earlier this year, highlighted the prevalence of this growing way of work in SA. I spoke to Safrea chair Laura Rawden about the benefit of belonging to a professional body like this as the world of work continues to evolve across the continent.



Laura Rawden, Safrea chair.

Talking through key findings of the first ever Safrea report, Rawden said this was the first research into the South African freelance market, and their first research was focused on the media freelance market and other creative industries.



All about freelancing in the SA media industry

Leigh Andrews 31 Jan 2017



They took a look at a number of different parameters, demographics and race.

Painting a picture of freelancing in South Africa

Interestingly, there were a number of misconceptions about the industry. They found that we have a group of highly skilled, experienced workers, which goes against some of the stereotypes of freelancers as 'young people on the beach'. Nor is it a case of mommy bloggers moonlighting on the side. These are very talented individuals. The majority – 78% – are female. There's also a fair geographic spread across the country, significantly in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The biggest misconception or problem though, lies in earnings. Rawden explains, "The average earning of a freelancer in South Africa just doesn't match up even to the baseline wage of the average worker in the country. Freelancers are earning in the vicinity of R10k a month, whereas for the average South African employee it is at just over R18k."



Safrea releases first-ever freelance media trends and income report

Safrea 25 Jan 2017



The report draws attention not only to this robust, skilled market but also a diversion from how they're compensated, and trying to raise awareness about that while also highlighting the next step of encouraging fairer pay for freelancers.

On Safrea itself and how it works, Rawden says it's a members' organisation meaning they offer paid membership and their number one mission is to advocate for the media freelancer. This is done by supporting them through tax and legal issues, as well as business administrative-type organisation like how to invoice and negotiate contracts, while also providing training, skills building and networking. That's important as freelancers tend to work from home and not see any colleagues, so Safrea provides that much-needed community.

Blurring borders: The African media freelancer

On how freelancing in South Africa differs from the rest of the continent, Rawden said as they conduct more research, they get more hard data. Much of this is circumstantial and built on anecdotal evidence from Safrea's members, but overall, the picture is not very different, particularly if you look at the creative and arts industries and journalism in particular.

Safrea has built a number of partnerships with other African organisations like their own to support the growing freelance industry. Across the board internationally, the media industry just doesn't have the resources it used to have. This means more and more people are moving into freelance.



As an example of this, Rawden mentions they've joined forces with the Association of Freelance Journalists in Kenya or AFJK, as the [Alliance of African Media Associations](#) (AAMA) in August 2016. That was the first step in building an umbrella organisation that represents media professionals in Africa and building their skills while recognising and supporting their rights in general – a big issue across the continent.

There's been a definite pick-up in members of Safrea from outside of South Africa, with diverse membership of all walks of life both across age groups in the country as well as on the rest of the continent, particularly within Kenyan and French-speaking African countries joining.

On the benefit of boosting the freelance economy across the continent and getting understanding out there that it is a worthy way of work that deserves equal compensation, Rawden lists being prepared for the **future of work**. We do still have this 9-to-5, office-based work environment, but that is changing. To be able to have a robust organisation like Safrea, already focusing on strengthening the freelance careers, can only protect us as the economy changes.

Rawden says, "We're going to see jobs change. More flexibility, more working from home, more freelancers." Safrea is preparing people for that shift, both employers and employees.

If any professional organisation or professional in the media industry is interested, make contact as Safrea is always open for partnerships and to collaborate and build a stronger African market. Follow Safrea [on Twitter](#) and visit [Safrea's press office](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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