

Subject: 2008 GSR Consultation

In order to maximize the use of available network resources or to minimize duplication of infrastructure development, it is vital to have resource sharing arrangements to reduce the service provision costs.

Savings on sharing of network capacity & capabilities, backbone, radio links, existing base stations etc., could be utilized to reduce the tariffs. Sharing can be in different forms, which best suits operators rolling out plans may be selected. It can be the available sites or associated building space etc.

Sharing will benefit new operators to cover a large area in a short period. While developing one's own network, other operators' network facilities could be considered as virtually a part of their network if they have sharing arrangement in place. Infrastructure can be shared on a geographical basis by making national roaming and it is the best solution for such situations.

Sharing networks for rural deployment is cost effective as the cost for electricity and road access for sites or to get accessibility to customer premises is very high compared to urban situation.

Sharing of duct space, fibers, cable capacities will benefit to reduce service provision cost drastically as the cost to obtain way leave is very high compared to the savings on material and labor. Sharing of base station equipment, bill processing and other similar facilities also could be allowed if the concerned parties have mutually agreed. Co-location of network elements and sharing of frequency spectrum for wireless based telecom services also possible.

Establishment of common shared networks will benefit to allow other operator's to carry their traffic. Common shared network is where one network with additional capacity sharing for the traffic demand of other operators.

Sharing operators have to set up a win-win situation and it also should give them a competitive advantage over other operators in the market. To sustain the arrangement effectively their rolling out strategies should not be overlapping.

Regulator should ensure that sharing facilities are allowed if the participating operators have their own network capacities or coverage to a reasonable level. Again they should have their own network to provide service independently. Otherwise a development in the sector will not happen.

Infrastructure sharing should be mandated at strategic locations and also where other operators have operating constraints. Besides, the Regulator has to encourage sharing of transmission towers and masts to reduce the impact on the environment and to minimize the inconvenience to the neighbourhood residents.

Sharing of infrastructure for national interests is considered as of high importance. For example, if the government wants to expand data communication facilities to support e-learning/e-

government services as a national priority, it is not easy to have a backbone network to cover the whole country within a short period of time.

In Sri Lanka, the development of a fiber optic network by individual companies is not an easy task, as it requires clearances from a number of different government agencies including central, provincial and local government authorities. It is difficult to obtain rights of way, as it needs detailed study of the proposed cable routes and to stick into their conditions. The Sri Lanka Railways (SLR) and the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB) both have existing rights of way and an extensive national network. A National Policy should support to obtain rights of way of similar facilities for National requirements where possible.

Power line communication and fiber on power poles and national grid system can be utilized for quick deployment. With power line communication those houses with national electricity supply can be provided with Internet facilities at a very low cost for which mutual agreement should be in place between two parties. Government should have some policy decision in place facilitate such rules and regulations. Rather than undertaking heavy work on excavation for cable laying for voice, data or other, Services providers are to be allowed to share power poles, which will reduce cost of accessibility for last mile and reduce disturbance to the public. Besides, for long haul of broadband services to far destinations, power pylons can be used to support fiber cables; Joint ventures with power distribution companies will facilitate speedy deployment of broadband services all over the country. National policy on such matters is to be proposed.

Infrastructure Provision companies are to be promoted to provide ready- made sites and capacity or space to existing service providers. Operators are to be allowed to share infrastructure as long as they maintain full operational control of their network.