



All India Graduate Engineers & Telecom Officers Association

Central Headquarter, New Delhi

(The Recognised Representative Association of BSNL)

President
Ravi Shil Verma
8373967633

General Secretary
Md. Wasi Ahmad
9431200347

Finance Secretary
Yogendra Jharwal
9414000877

All communication at E-mail - "chqaigetoa@gmail.com" only

GS/AIGETOA/2021/118

dated 30.09.2021

To,

Members of the Committee
Committee on Review of Cluster Mechanism
BSNL Corporate Office, New Delhi-110001

Subject: Suggestions/views of AIGETOA on existing Cluster Outsourcing for Copper based services- Reg.

Reference: Meeting held with the Committee Members on 28.09.2021 through online mode.

Respected Sir,

This is in continuity of our submission and views expressed in the referred meeting about the desired improvement in the existing Cluster Based Outsourcing system deployed in BSNL to maintain copper based Landline, Broadband, Lease Circuits etc and the need to review policy decision of implementation of Cluster Mechanism in the urban, semi-urban, rural, hilly terrain across all Circles/BAs/OAs.

The drastic surrendering of landline and broadband connections has raised serious questions on the real utility of the Cluster Based Outsourcing Service and its severe flaws in the implementation on the ground. The copper based broadband may be facing some inherent challenges from high speed FTTH roll out but surrendering of landline has no justifications except that of poor services to the customers despite of the implementation of the Cluster Mechanism and spending Crores of rupees in the system. In our recently concluded Central Executive Committee Meeting on 2nd and 3rd August 2021, Circle Representatives across the Circles appraised serious bottlenecks in the Cluster System and helplessness of our field officers (JTO/SDE/DET) in dealing with the Cluster Partners. We have been raising the issues continuously with the management including in our last meeting on 28.09.2021 with the Committee Members constituted for the purpose to give its recommendation to review the Cluster Mechanism. In this regard, following are our suggestions to the Committee Members for consideration in their recommendations:

OUR VIEWS ON CONITUITY OF CLUSTER SYSTEM:

1. After passage of about 1.5 Years of implementation of Outsourcing Model of Cluster System for the maintenance of copper based services (LL/BB/Lease Circuits), everyone agree that the system has failed to meet the desired expectation, which was introduced after VRS in BSNL. ***Even the top 50 SSAs Cluster performance Report of dated 15.09.2021 uploaded by the Corporate Office suggest that it is far behind from the standard SLA Parameters vis-a-vis MTTR and Fault Clearance within 24 Hrs, which shows the actual status of the cluster system in the field units.*** The status of remaining places will be definitely poorer in comparison to the above top 50 SSAs, which itself peak the complete story.

2. The disconnection of landline and broadband connections @ more than 20%, despite spending of Crores of rupees on the cluster system has poses a serious question on its continuity in a blanket manner across the Circles/Regions. Further, the density of LL/BB is varying from Circle to Circle and one formula can't be justified for all Circles in this condition. Some Circles are still having good number of connections, especially in the urban areas whereas the situation is not same for other Circles. It has been seen that in many places one cluster is covering large geographical area and causing serious challenges to maintain the services in the existing cluster system, which was earlier being maintained in less expenditure through internal system.

Hence, it's a high time that the Corporate Office should review about continuity of Cluster based maintenance system for all areas/regions in the changed scenario of depleting connections and challenges in the field units by taking inputs from every Circle Heads.

3. We request that the BSNL Corporate Office should also take a decision about the amount to be invested in the already shrinking copper business and overall a policy decision needs to be taken in this regard. We should also think about continuity of providing copper based services in exchanges with less than 100 numbers on account of its financial non-viability and services issue by the cluster partner. It is seen that numbers of such exchanges are counted for the purpose of Cluster but due to less number and far flanged scattered areas, C is not providing the manpower for the services and customers are surrendering the connections in absence of proper services. ***We may think to convert such exchanges into OLT enable and completely migrate to fiber based services through dedicated TIPS/MSOs, wherever it is feasible to make it a financially viable.***
4. In the light of the fact that copper has it limited speed/inherent problems and availability of high speed data over fiber in the market at comparable price, the time has reached to decide about Return on Investment (RoI) in copper based LL/BB services. ***Hence it is suggested to review the Policy Decision of implementation of Cluster System completely and migrate to previous system of maintenance through internal mechanism of contractual labour and direct supervision of our officers/staffs with limited investment.***

SUGGESTIONS ON IMPROVEMENT IN EXISTING CLUSTER SYSTEM:

1. **Penalty Clause:** The existing Penalty Clause should be reviewed and increased up to 50% for deficiency in the services/ not meeting of the SLA Parameters instead of existing 15%. Also, clarity needs to be incorporated in the Agreement/Tender and provisions should be made to deduct 100% from the invoice for those areas, where no workforce/service was provided by the CP. ***In all such cases, customers should not be allowed to suffer and BA Heads should be empowered to approve the maintenance of the services through temporary advance by ensuring its availability to the field officers i.e. JTO/SDE in time and 100% payment of such areas should be deducted from the invoice of the CP.***
2. **Maintenance should be given from MDF to Customer Premises under Cluster Partner (CP):** The complete line from the MDF to Customer Premises should be given under the Cluster System to check the shifting of responsibility in case of faults by Cluster Partners. It has been seen that some times, faults are shifted on the Primary Cable without justified reason and even the pair is not changed despite availability of the same in the primary cable resulting in the delay in restoration of faults and churning out of the customers. ***So, the complete network from MDF to Customer Premises should be incorporated in the Cluster Outsourcing System to a single Vendor.***

3. **Provision of Designated Number of Persons in a certain Cluster/Number Size by CP:** There is no provision in the Tender/Agreement about the number of persons to be deployed for a certain size of Cluster/Outdoor network for the maintenance by the Cluster Partners giving scope to them to put very minimal number of staffs in field units, which is affecting the service adversely and no control of the field JTO/SDE and Cluster In-charge. ***A provision needs to be incorporated to deploy a fix number of skilled staffs and supervisor for certain size of Custer/Outdoor Network.*** All exchanges irrespective of its working line/geographical area should be covered under the service and mechanism should be developed to provide sufficient man power in the field by CP and measures should be provided in the system to gauge it by the Cluster In-charge/Area Field Officers.
4. **Provisions to ensure supply of required materials for the maintenance:** The Cluster Partners are not providing the required materials for the maintenance of the service and there is no clause in the Tender to ensure its compliance. In absence of the materials many faults are left unattended and resulting in closer of the service by the customer. ***A mechanism needs to be introduced for providing and keeping certain quantity of store i.e. Drop-wire. 5 pair cable, 10 pair cable, 20 pair cable, jointing kits and its Accessories, Jumper wires, DP Tag blocks and other subscriber end line materials, centrally per cluster in the beginning of each month for the maintenance under proper certification by the Cluster In-charge. If the store remains unused, it will continue for next month.*** This will keep our outdoor network better else it will fade out very quickly in absence of any investment on the network by the Cluster Partner.
5. **Smile Code to Customers for Closer of Docket:** Now a day in the service industry, it is very common to provide Smile Code to the Customers to close a docket by the Service Personnel. ***Similarly, either we should introduced SMILE CODE TO THE CUSTOMERS in our system for closer of a fault docket by the Cluster Staff or some intervention of BSNL Personals to verify the closer docket initiated by the Cluster Staff.*** If the service has actually rendered, the time of initiation of the closer docket by the CP will be treated as closing time after clearance by BSNL In-charge.
6. **New Connection has to be provided by CP unless not declared TNF by BSNL Personnel:** It has seen that Cluster Staffs are not showing interest in providing new connections due to involvement of store items. Many times the new connections are declared TNF by the cluster Staffs giving one reason or other. When such churning out is happening, then declaring TNF is completely false. ***So, a clear provision should be incorporated for provisioning of New Connections by the Cluster Partner and only BSNL Officer can declare NTC Non Feasible. In case of non adherence about NTC Provisioning by the Cluster Partner, a severe penalty clause should be provided to check it.***
7. **Lease Circuits Faults Booked through IVRS hits in Prabal Plus but doesn't hit FMS Portal:** The Lease line faults which are being booked through IVRS (18004251957) only hits Prabal Plus but doesn't reflect in FMS vendor login because Prabal Plus is not mapped with FMS. This is causing no proper support for the maintenance of lease circuits by the cluster partners whereas the circuits are counted for invoice purpose by the CP. In this case, the faults are not getting rectified in time and penalty is not imposed in case of defiant by the CP. The faults remain pending for 4-5 days giving severe dissatisfaction to the customers and Lease Circuits are getting disconnected and switched to other ISP, despite of major source of revenue. ***So, the needful integrations should be made in Prabal Plus and FMS, so that lease circuit faults should be reflected in real-time basis to the Cluster Partner and strict monitoring should made to ensure to meet 3 Hrs SLA for LCs.***

8. **Limitation of Cluster Partner to take Business and capping of Min/Max Rate:** It has been reported that same vendor is taking works for many places but not providing sufficient staff to meet the service requirements. So there should be some kind of restriction for taking works at a limited number of clusters by same vendor. It has also been seen that the vendors are coating lower rate at many places in want of the business but after award of the tender they are miserably failing to meet the SLA and service requirements. ***So, a provisions should be incorporated to on both side of the rate i.e. Minimum/Maximum to be accepted for the Cluster Based Outsourcing System.*** We have to see that the business should be financial viable for both BSNL and Cluster Partners and then only it can survive successfully and provide optimum output.
9. **Experience of related works should be strictly followed in the award of works:** It has been seen that many Cluster Partners don't have the related work experience and so failing to meet the desired success whereas more relevant vendors/Ex Employees with cable work experience don't find themselves capable to participate in the Tender due to Financial Clause. ***So, the existing clause of work experience should be strictly followed and financial turnover clause may be relaxed to participate more vendors in the Cluster outsourcing System.***
10. **Same Building Test/Service Connections Should be exempted from the Outsource:** We have seen that many numbers are working as testing and service numbers in the same building which doesn't required much support for the maintenance. ***Hence a clear direction must be incorporated in the Tender to not include such numbers which are located in same building of exchange/MDF for cluster count of working lines and unwanted expenditure on such numbers must be saved.***
11. **Recognition of Good Cluster Partner on Monthly Basis in every Circle:** It is quite natural to have both good as well as bad person in the system and accordingly they should be treated to bring improvement in the organization. The way we are penalizing the non performing cluster partners, a provision should be incorporated to recognize the Best Cluster Partner in Circle every month. A monthly review meeting must be held at the level of CGMT in all Circles to assess the performance and award the Best Cluster Partner in the Circle and his Photograph with company Name should be displayed at suitable location in the Circle to motivate others to improve their performance.
12. **Involvement of Association/Unions for improvement:** A regular interaction should be held at BA/OA Level with the representative associations/unions to incorporate their view and suggestion for improvement in monitoring of the Cluster system to overall improve the service.

We do hope that our suggestions will be taken in right spirit and incorporated in the recommendations by the Committee formed for the purpose and the management will give a serious thought to consider these suggestions of the association for the betterment of the BSNL.

With warm regards,

Sd/--
[MD. WASI AHMAD]
General Secretary

Copy to:

1. The CMD BSNL for kind information please.
2. All functional Board of Directors of BSNL for kind information please.