



2020

Consultation Paper

Future of Wireless Local Loop Regime in Pakistan

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wireless Local Loop (WLL) regime was introduced in Pakistan in 2004 in accordance with the De-Regulation Policy 2003 with spectrum assignments in 450 MHz, 479 MHz, 1900 MHz and 3.5 GHz bands. WLL licenses were distinguished from mobile cellular licenses through geographical and mobility restriction; regional licenses with single cell mobility. The frequency spectrum of WLL licensees shall expire in **2024**. An overview of the licensees is attached below:

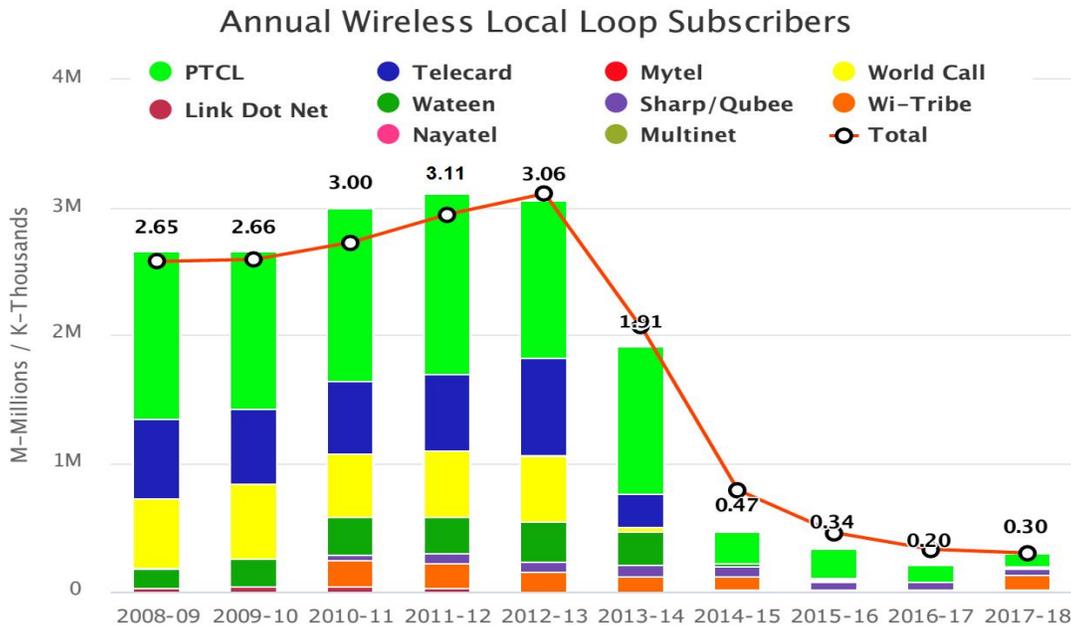
Sr. No	Company Name	Regions	Frequency Bands
1	PTCL	14 Regions	450 MHz, 1900 Hz and 3.5 GHz
2	DV Com Data (Pvt.) Ltd	9 Regions	1900 MHz
3	World Call Telecom Limited	14 Regions	450 MHz, 479 MHz, 1900 MHz and 3.5 GHz
4	Wi-Tribe Pakistan (Pvt.) Limited	14 Regions	3.5 GHz
5	Wateen WiMax (Pvt.) Limited	14 Regions	3.5 GHz
6	LinkDot NET (Pvt.) Limited	12 Regions	3.5 GHz
7	Cyber Internet Services (Pvt.) Limited	ITR, LTR & KTR	3.5 GHz
8	Mytel (Pvt.) Ltd	NTR-1	3.5 GHz
9	Metrotel (Pvt.) Ltd	GTR	3.5 GHz
10	Super Dialogue (Pvt.) Limited	RTR, FTR	3.5 GHz
11	Sharp Communication (Pvt.) Limited	14 Regions	3.5 GHz

WLL Licenses of following companies are no more operational due to reasons mentioned against each:

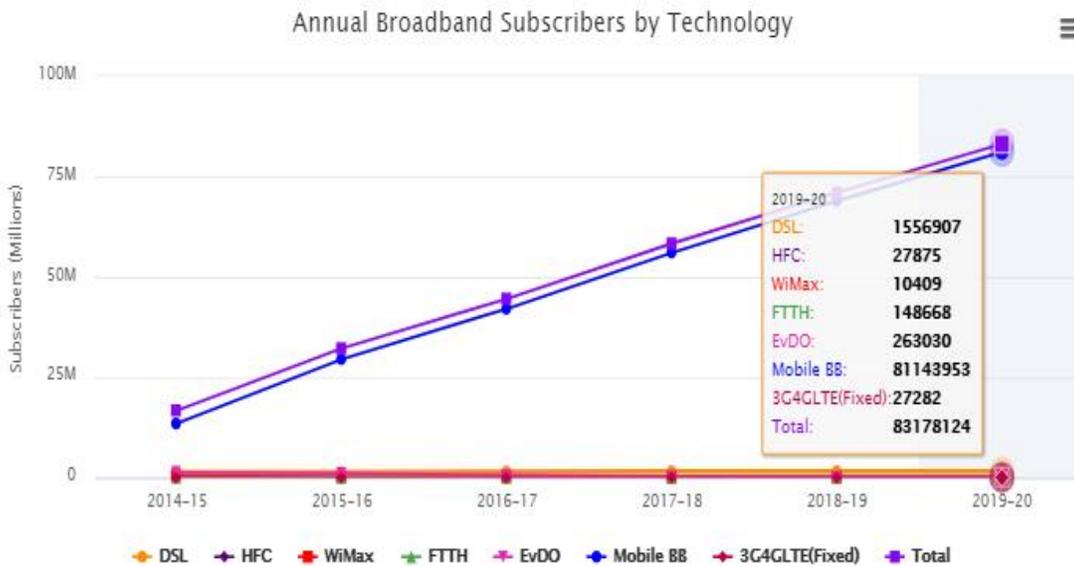
Ser. No.	Organization	Licensed Regions	Status	Remarks
1	Great Bear Int'l (Pvt.) Limited	All Fourteen Regions	Terminated	Due to discontinuation of services and non-fulfillment of rollout obligations
2	Ertibatat (Pvt.) Limited,	NTR-II	Cancelled	Due to non-fulfillment of rollout obligations
3	Sachal Satellite Communication (Pvt.) Limited,	STR-I	Cancelled	
4	Sachal Softec (Pvt.) Limited	STR-V	Cancelled	
5	Telecard Limited	All regions	Frequency withdrawn	Upon licensee's request

2. Evolution of WLL Services in Pakistan

- 2.1 A total of 93 WLL licenses were issued to 18 companies in 2004 for various regions of Pakistan in frequency bands of 450, 479, 1900 and 3500 MHz. Some of the operators failed to complete initial mandatory roll-out obligations despite grant of extension in timelines and hence their respective licenses were cancelled/terminated. PTCL, Telecard and WorldCall had a combined subscriber base of around 2.4 Million in 2008-09 which kept on improving till 2012-13. Wi-Tribe, Wateen and Sharp also made some impact during this time frame. However, since 2012-13 there has been a constant decline due to extensive roll out by the mobile operators.
- 2.2 Some of the operators have multiple frequencies assignment in their licensed regions. Now even with termination of licenses and Telecard becoming FLL operator, there are still ten (10) operators with eighty (80) licenses. However, the subscriber base is on a constant decline.



2.3 Market share of CMOs in comparison with non-cellular operators can be seen in below chart:



By the end of July 2020, total number of broadband subscribers in Pakistan were around 83 Million and Mobile broadband subscription stood at 81 Million. The presence of non-cellular operators in general and WLL operators in particular is negligible in comparison with Cellular operators.

3. **Future of WLL Regime**

Since the introduction of WLL regime in Pakistan in 2004, there have been enormous technological developments aimed at efficient utilization of the scarce resource i.e. frequency spectrum. Some of the spectrum bands assigned to WLL operators have already been identified for higher value mobile broadband services like 2100/1900 MHz and also for 5G i.e. 3.5 GHz. The most important being 3.5 GHz band wherein 5G network is deployed in many countries. In Pakistan as well, MoIT&T has issued Policy Directive for “Test and Development of Future Technologies Particularly for Fifth Generation (5G) Wireless Networks in Pakistan” wherein spectrum in 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz has been identified. PTA accordingly published a “Framework for Test and Development of Future Technologies Particularly for Fifth Generation (5G) Wireless Networks in Pakistan, in line with GoP Policy Directive. CMPak (Zong), PMCL (Jazz) and Telenor have conducted 5G trials in 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz spectrum while PTCL & Ufone joint trial is under process.

As the frequency assignments shall expire in 2024, there is a need to have clarity on future of WLL regime so as to allow WLLOs ample time to prepare their business plans. The same requires in depth analysis of performance of WLLOs over the years, challenges and opportunities, best regulatory practises for efficient utilization of frequency spectrum, etc. In order to come up with a solution that is in the best interest of the country, detailed comments of the stake holders are invited on the following questions:

Question Number 1

What type of performance/service delivery was expected from WLL operators and how did they actually perform?

Question Number 2

What were the regulatory, technical and financial impediments that affected WLL business adversely?

Question Number 3

How can the WLL operators sustain their business up to 2024?

Question Number 4

Does it make a business case for WLL operators to continue operations beyond 2024 if the circumstances remain the same?

Question Number 5

What could be the possible scenarios for return of WLL spectrum, prior to expiry date i.e. 2024, by interested operators?

Question Number 6

What is the suggested regulatory regime beyond 2024 to safeguard WLL business while ensuring efficient spectrum utilization as well as maintaining distinction from cellular mobile/NGMS services?

Question Number 7

Keeping in view identification of certain bands for IMT 2020 and beyond, what could be the best utilization of existing WLL frequency bands i.e. 450, 479, 1900 and 3500 MHz?

Question No. 8

What are the preferred frequency bands for continued operation beyond 2024 if bands identified for IMT in Pakistan (2600 & 3500 MHz) are excluded? Any interest in mmWave spectrum for fixed use cases? What would be the minimum bandwidth requirement for each suggested band?

Question Number 9

Could there be a possibility of mixed-use cases for fixed wireless and mobile services in any of the frequency bands acquired through auction process e.g. FWA service through Virtual Network Operator Model if spectrum is held by CMOs?

Question No. 10

Current WLL licensing regime is on regional basis. Should any new regime be maintained as region wise or changed to single nation-wide licensing?

4. How to respond:

The stakeholders are requested to respond back to this consultation by **15th October, 2020**. All responses should be sent electronically to DD (WLL) PTA HQs at mudassar@pta.gov.pk with a copy to Director General (Strategy and development) PTA HQs at imad@pta.gov.pk

Any comments received after **15th October, 2020** would not be considered.

PTA assures the stakeholder that all the comments received would be analyzed and would be duly considered while preparing recommendation for future of WLL regime.