CHAPTER – VI

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS
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The telecommunications network in Anantapur district was first introduced in 1978 and the Department of telecommunications has improved significantly since 1980 both in size and service. Initially most of the exchanges were either magneto type or manual type and these were successively upgraded into automatic electromechanical type. At present there are 132 digital electronic telephone exchanges in Anantapur district. Of the total equipped capacity of 65,765 lines 57,996 lines are working. Fully automatic International subscriber dialing service is available in almost all the towns in the district. Of the 964 villages in the district 831 villages are provided with public telephone service.

The important highlights in extending telecom services in Anantapur district are:

1. Fax message facility was introduced in 1990
2. Express money Transfer Service was started in 1994
3. E-mail service was introduced in 1997
4. Internet services were introduced by VSNL on commercial scale in 1999.

The growth of village public telephones has been phenomenal during 1991-99 as they increased from 87 to 831. There are 372 Multi Access Radio Receptor Public Telephones and 459 Land Line Public Telephones in the District. Large number of MARR PTs is found in Kadiri, Kambadur and Pamidi mandals. Similarly large number of LL PTs are found in Uravakonda, Narpala and Gooty Mandals. 60.0 percent of the VPTs are located in Grossery shops and 39.0 percent in Branch Post Offices. It is noted that 10.0 per cent of the MARR PTs in the villages are not functioning and similarly one-tenth of the LL PTs are out of order.
The average cost of establishing each MARR PTs increased from Rs. 75,000 in 1991-92 to Rs. 1.00 lakhs in 1998-99. On the other hand the average cost of establishing Land Line PTs increased from Rs. 65,000 to Rs. 93,000 during the same period.

The average operating cost of each MARR PT increased from Rs. 2,200 in 1991-92 to Rs. 3,260. The average operating cost of each LL PT increased from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2457 during the same period.

The revenue collected from VPTs is not keeping pace with the revenue demanded. As a result, the gap between demand and collection of revenues from VPTs is widening causing serious problems of financial drain of VPTs.

Findings of the Study:

There is no proper coordination between the Telecom employees for keeping track of the functioning of VPTs.

One AE (MARR) for the district finds it difficult to supervise the functioning of VPTs in the district. They rarely visited some of the VPTs.

Technicians are unable to attend to the repair works for want of directions from authorities and the material to replace the damaged one. Some officers are not willing to spare their vehicles for use by AEs in the rural areas and all AEs don't have vehicles to visit villages.

Conveyence to villages and supply of required inputs are the problems of the staff attending the repair and maintainance works of VPTs. Inadequate number of trained and
skilled technicians is the problem that delays the repairing of the VPTs. Officers are not aware of the cost of installation of VPTs in the district, information on the cost of installation is not available in the TDM office as the estimates are prepared and works are executed from Central Office at Hyderabad.

Officers complain that non-functioning of VPTs is due to the inferior quality cable used in installing VPTs. No information and records are available on the cost of maintenance of VPTs. Conversion work of land line connection into problem free MARR is very slow.

In some villages cable works are progressing at a dead slow rate as a result of threats from local leaders demanding the installation of VPTs is their localities. The location of some VPTs are absolutely unsuitable for use. More specifically, the VPTs located in Gram Panchayat Office, Residence of the Sarapanch, found to be not useful to the villages.

There is no rationale or the guidelines that governed the sanction and location of VPTs in these places. Political pressure in some cases appears to be the reason for their locations.

The VPTs located in these places are of no use to the villages as the incoming calls are not entertained or attended to by the indifferent custodians of VPTs as they close their offices in the evening. In villages where VPT is available for use (openly kept panchayat office), it is used indiscriminately and unnecessarity also leading to a hike in the total bill.
In the absence of recording the names of the users and non-collection of charges, VPTs turn out to be defunct VPTs. Even the grossory public telephone custodian finds it difficult to collect appropriate amount from the users as the rates and charges of telephone use are not known to him. Computer billing is not available in the villages with VPTs.

In some villages people are under the illusion that VPTs can be used free of charge. The branch post master finds it difficult to collect the meagre local call rates from the influential and dominating people in the village.

As a result, the telephone bills amount ranges from just Rs. 1 to Rs. 300. In many villages the average amount of telephone bill is Rs. 30. The payment of these small amounts is also withheld in the absence of collections from telephone users.

The maintenance of many VPTs is not satisfactory, as the department officials are not inspecting VPTs regularly.

Information about the breakdown of VPTs reaches the connected exchange lately and they have to look at the authorities for directions, leading to abnormal delays in the repairing of VPTs. Some VPTs are left unattended to for more than a month's time when out of order.

In some villages the broken equipment is lying there since 6 months for want of vehicle service to transport it to the exchange premises. Many VPTs suffer from the problem of low voice during the nights because the batteries are not exposed to sun or recharged with distilled water regularly either by the custodian or by the department. In
some villages, custodians are misusing the services of battery for their domestic lighting as the Department is maintaining silence on this or turning a blind eye to this misdeed.

**Recommendations to improve the performance of VPTs:**

Proper coordination between different divisions of telecom employees need to be ensured. For this, staff is to be earmarked for MARR and LL separately. The district may be divided into 4 sectors and each sector is to be placed under the supervision of AE assisted by field staff. For this the department has to overcome the problem with labour unions. Jeeps are the suitable vehicles to be provided to the AE for use in the villages.

Regularly and periodic inspections of VPTs by AEs is very essential. Similarly, periodic inspection of the exchanges in person by the SDE is important. Computerisation of the details of VPTs and their updating in the TDM office is of crucial importance. Monthly meetings of AEs, DEs and TDM may be arranged to discuss the problems and functioning of VPTs. Proper records about the length of cable and cost of installation of VPTs need to be maintained in the District Office. The AEs shall have knowledge about these costs. AEs shall maintain the records relating to the annual maintenance cost of VPTs, details relating to their repairs, replacement of material etc.

Preference is to be given to grossory shops in locating the VPTs. Necessary care is to be exercised by the Department to protect the material from theft during the period of installation.

Disbursement of telephone bills to the VPTs is to be made regular and payment is to be made obligatory. Department shall supply a chart showing the telephone rates in
accordance with the pulse and time of use. Periodic supply of distilled water for the recharge of the LL battery is to be ensured.

VPTs custodians are ignorant of the small techniques or adjustment to be made to restore the functioning of VPTs. Hence, they are to be educated by the Department at the telephone exchanges by training them in the operation of VPTs.

Manual PT custodians are ignorant of the financial benefit they get for running the VPTs. Infact, lumpsum remunuration is to be offered to the VPT custodians in the place of commission they can claim, as they are not aware of it. Incentives need to be offered to the VPTs custodians for attending the incoming calls properly by adjusting commission.

Conversion of Land Land VPTs into MARR may be accelerated. Superior quality equipment is to be used. Many VPTs are favouring the STD facility, provision of stop watches and supply of rate schedules enables them to collect the charges from the users regularly and promptly.

Further, computerised bill furnishing the telephone number amount charges enables them to recover the amount properly.

VPTs may be sanctioned to SCs and STs in villages where their population is sizable.