



First Copper Lines Unbundled in Bahrain

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Over the past few weeks, a number of licensed operators (OLOs) have started to test Batelco's Local Loop Unbundling (LLU) services in two of Batelco's exchanges. LLU will enable alternative operators to provide broadband and fixed services using Batelco's copper loops. The purpose of this field test is for operators to understand the capabilities of the Batelco copper lines and to test the processes whereby lines are unbundled and the services provided over unbundled loops.

Dr. Mohammed Al Amer, TRA's Chairman, said "The field tests are essential for a smooth and rapid implementation of LLU. Thanks to the positive approach of all participants, the field tests are progressing well. Participants are providing useful feedback on both process and technical issues encountered during the tests. The tests also enable operators to gain first-hand experience of unbundling which should enable them to successfully launch their services based on LLU."

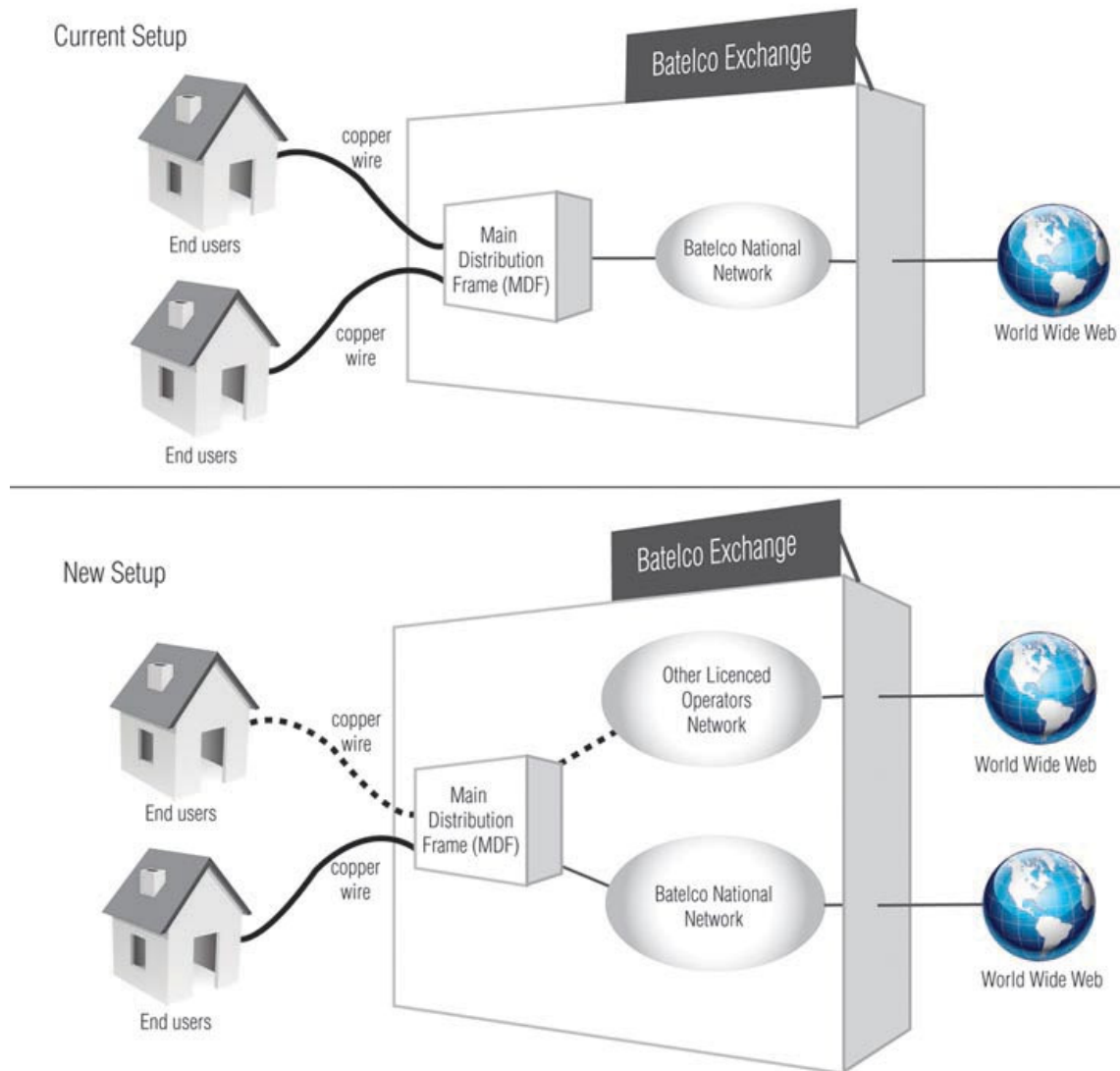
Dr. Al Amer went on to say "Making the local loop available to OLOs is a major step forward for the industry and to TRA's knowledge a first amongst Middle East and GCC countries. Not only will this increase the competitive supply of Internet services but it should also result in better prices and higher broadband speeds. In line with the Kingdom's objectives of the 2030 economic vision, such improvements will encourage businesses and consumers to make more use of Internet and Internet based applications."

Adel Darwish, Manager of Market and Competition at TRA and LLU project manager, said "After an extensive public consultation, TRA has determined that access to Batelco's copper network should be made available on fair and non-discriminatory terms to enable OLOs to offer retail services to end-customers, as it would be difficult to rapidly replicate the copper network."

LLU is another alternative way of delivering choice to consumers for operators that do not have their own access infrastructure. There is considerable merit in making effective use of bottlenecks such as the copper local loop by granting OLOs regulated access to bottleneck. This should lead to service innovation and more affordable services being made available to end-users. There are also potential benefits to Batelco arising from the increased broadband market growth.

Once the field test is completed, the next step will be agreeing with Batelco the terms and conditions of the LLU services which will then be imbedded within the reference offer of Batelco. TRA is expecting that LLU will be available to OLOs by the second half of this year.

What is LLU?



About TRA

Since its establishment in 2002 the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of the Kingdom of Bahrain (TRA) has been working with government, consumers, operators and investors to develop the Kingdom of Bahrain into the region's most modern communications hub and to facilitate the growth of the market. As an exemplary Regulator for the region, TRA independently carries out its duties in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. More information about TRA can be viewed at www.tra.org.bh

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