

Arman Financial Services Limited

September 13, 2019

Rating

Instrument*	Amount (Rs. crore)	Rating ¹	Rating Action
Non-Convertible Debenture Issue	27.50 (reduced from 28.00)	CARE BBB+; Stable [Triple B Plus; Outlook: Stable]	Reaffirmed
Total	27.50 (Rupees Twenty Seven Crore and Fifty Lakh only)		

*Details of instruments in Annexure-1

Detailed Rationale & Key Rating Drivers

For arriving at the rating of Arman Financial Services Limited (AFSL), CARE has taken a consolidated view of AFSL, which includes its wholly owned subsidiary Namra Finance Limited (NFL) engaged in micro finance lending, apart from the standalone financing business of AFSL. This is on account of the operational, managerial and financial linkages between the two entities. Together the entities are referred to as 'group'.

The rating assigned to the Non-Convertible Debenture Issue of AFSL continues to derive strength from group's established track record of operations in financing business, experienced & professional management, diversified operations across three different loan segments, viz. micro-finance, vehicle finance and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) lending and adequate internal control systems.

The rating also factors in robust growth in the loan portfolio over the last two years alongwith improvement in profitability during FY19 (refers to period from April 01 to March 31) post a dip in previous year, though the loan book size remains moderate.

The ratings further derive strength from increasing geographical diversification of group's operations, comfortable liquidity profile and collection efficiency, adequate capital adequacy and improvement in asset quality during FY19.

The rating, however, continue to be constrained on account of its moderate loan book with limited track record of operations in new geographies and products, risks associated with unsecured lending in microfinance and MSME loans and its presence in a highly competitive financing industry alongwith regulatory risks pertaining to the microfinance business.

AFSL's ability to further expand its loan portfolio alongwith greater geographical and product diversification, further improve its asset quality, maintain its capital adequacy and leverage through infusion of requisite equity funds, along with timely tie-up of funding from banks and financial institutions to support growth in business would be the key rating sensitivities.

Detailed description of the key rating drivers

Key Rating Strengths

Established track record of operations along-with experienced and professional management: AFSL is engaged in the financing business since 1992 and has demonstrated a long track record of operations through various business cycles. The company is promoted by Mr. Jayendra Patel, the present Vice Chairman and Managing Director of the company, who has a wide industry experience of more than two decades. He is supported by Mr. Aalok Patel, son of Mr. Jayendra Patel, who is also on the Board of the Directors of the company and is actively involved in the business. Further, in August 2018, Mr. Alok Prasad joined as the Chairman on the Board of Directors of AFSL. Mr. Prasad has more than 35 years of experience in regulatory, banking and financial services.

Diversified operations across three segments with microfinance comprising major share: The group is present in three segments viz. Micro financing, Vehicle financing and MSME lending, wherein, AFSL on a standalone basis undertakes Vehicle financing and MSME lending, while the microfinance lending is done through NFL, its wholly owned subsidiary. All these three segments witnessed healthy growth in disbursements during FY19. Microfinance lending continued to be the largest segment for the group constituting 71% of its total AUM as on March 31, 2019.

Growth in loan portfolio and improvement in profitability in FY19: Group's loan portfolio grew by around 85% CAGR over the last two years to Rs.617.86 crore during FY19, due to healthy growth witnessed in Micro financing and MSME lending and moderate growth in two-wheeler segment. The growth was largely driven by growth in the number of loans disbursed due to expansion in branch network and operational set-up; alongwith marginal increase in the ticket size. Moreover, the AUM of the group stood at Rs.684.70 crore (P.Y. Rs.431.20 crore).

¹ Complete definitions of the ratings assigned are available at www.careratings.com and in other CARE publications.

Profitability:

The group's profitability, after witnessing a dip in FY18, improved in FY19 owing to improvement in asset quality post wearing-off of the impact of demonetization; alongwith growth of higher margin MSME segment during the year.

The Net Interest Margin (NIM) improved by 55 bps y-o-y to 12.14% (P.Y. 11.59%) and ROTA improved by 153 bps y-o-y during FY19 to 3.66% from 2.13% during FY18 as a result of improvement in NIM, lower operational cost due to established infrastructure and improvement in asset quality translating into lower provisions and write off expenses in proportion to the loan portfolio.

Increasing geographical diversification: The group expanded its operations to Uttarakhand and Rajasthan in last two years FY19; alongwith increasing its penetration in existing states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra which has gradually resulted in reduced concentration of AUM in Gujarat (49% in FY19; 57% in FY18). As on March 31, 2019, the group had presence across more than 50 districts in these six states with a network of 166 branches.

Comfortable liquidity and diversified resource base: Liquidity of the group remained comfortable with no cumulative mismatches in its asset liability management (ALM) statement owing to inherent shorter tenure lending than borrowing, moderate utilization of working capital limits at around 50-60% resulting in unutilized bank lines and commencement of securitization of select loan portfolio, from FY19.

Moreover, company's policy of maintaining liquid balances equivalent to around one-two months of disbursement requirement also provided comfort from credit perspective. As on March 31, 2019 AFSL had free cash and bank balance of Rs.50.64 crore (consolidated) which is largely equivalent to one month's disbursement or two months of debt servicing obligations (principal + interest) of both the companies.

Company's resource base is diversified with presence of over 29 banks and Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs); alongwith reputed private equity players. This apart, it also has flexibility to raise funds from capital markets, being a listed entity.

Improvement in asset quality alongwith comfortable collection efficiency and capitalization: Group's asset quality improved in FY19 with gross NPA declining to 0.99% as on March 31, 2019 from 1.69% as on March 31, 2018, reflecting wearing off of the impact of demonetization on its borrowers, primarily engaged in cash based economic activities. The collection efficiency for the combined loan portfolio of AFSL and NFL remained healthy at 99% during past 12 months ended March 31, 2019, underlining its healthy cash flows.

AFSL's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) on a standalone level continued to be comfortable at 34.21% as on March 31, 2019, improved from 28.02% as on June 30, 2018 due to fund infusion in the form of compulsory convertible debentures (CCDs) in April 2018. Going forward, timely infusion of equity funds shall remain crucial for achieving growth in business operations while maintaining the leverage and capitalization levels.

Key Rating Weaknesses

Moderate loan book alongwith limited track record of operations in new geographies and products: Loan portfolio of the group witnessed healthy growth in last two years, however remained moderate with an AUM of around Rs.684.70 crore as on March 31, 2019. Furthermore, it commenced microfinance lending operations in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan only during the last two years and thus has a limited track record of exposure to these local economies and their dynamics, in light of the unsecured nature of lending. Also, AFSL commenced unsecured MSME lending only during FY17 end, which scaled up sizably in last two years. Collectively, both these translates into a limited track record for the group in new geographies & products, hence its performance in terms of profitability and asset quality is yet to be established.

Furthermore, seasoning of the loan portfolio is moderate due to inherent short tenure loans with absence of any mid-year top-up, alongwith significant growth in loan portfolio in the past one year.

Risks associated with unsecured lending; albeit adequate internal control systems: Around 85% of the outstanding loan portfolio of the group as on March 31, 2019 was contributed by microfinance and MSME lending. The loans in both these business segments are unsecured in nature; exposing the company to probable losses in case of any delinquency as there is no asset which can be sold to recover the pending loan amounts. However, NPA's in these categories have been restricted, underlining adequate internal control and risk management systems followed by the management for loan disbursement and recoveries.

Presence in a competitive and highly regulated industry albeit healthy growth prospects: The NBFC-MFI segment has witnessed significant increase in the number players with the SHG – Bank Linkage Program (SBLP) launched in 1992 on a pilot basis having grown significantly as a full-fledged lending model across the country, enabling millions of poor households get access to sustainable financial services from the banking system. Further, other models of microfinance including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), co-operatives and trusts have also grown significantly in recent years, adding to the competition in the sector, its growth potential notwithstanding. This apart, Micro-finance players also face

competition from unorganized sector lending, which still has prevalence in large parts of the country. Furthermore, the company is also exposed to risks associated with any adverse changes in the regulatory policies guiding such NBFCs. However, growth prospect of micro-finance business in India continues to remain good given the market potential.

Analytical Approach: Consolidated

A consolidated approach including AFSL and NFL has been considered for analysis due to the following:

- NFL is a wholly owned subsidiary of AFSL
- Both entities are engaged in similar line of business (lending)
- Both entities operate under common management
- The entities have cash flow fungibility amongst each other

Applicable Criteria

[Criteria on assigning Outlook to Credit Ratings](#)

[CARE's Policy on Default Recognition](#)

[Rating Methodology: Factoring Linkages in Ratings](#)

[Rating Methodology - Non Banking Financial Companies](#)

[Financial Ratios-Financial Sector](#)

About the Company

Promoted by Mr. Jayendra Patel, AFSL is a Non-Deposit taking NBFC registered with Reserve Bank of India. Prior to May 2013, AFSL was engaged in the business of two-wheeler financing and microfinance lending business through Joint Liability Group (JLG) model. However, NFL got an NBFC – Micro Finance Institution license from RBI on February 14, 2013 and from May 2013, entire new microfinance lending is being carried out by NFL. In March 2017, AFSL also commenced MSME lending business.

AFSL, on a consolidated basis, operates across six states i.e. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan covering more than 50 districts through a network 166 branches as on March 31, 2019. Microfinance lending is presently the largest business segment of the group, which contributed 71% of its total assets under management (AUM) of Rs.684.70 crore (consolidated) as on March 31, 2019, while the balance was from two-wheeler loans (15%) and MSME loans (14%).

Brief consolidated financials of AFSL are tabulated below:

Brief Financials (Rs. crore)	FY18 (A)	FY19 (A)
Total operating income	80.03	141.06
PAT	7.30	21.33
Interest coverage (times)	1.27	1.49
Total Assets	470.42	696.57
Net NPA (%)	1.60	0.93
ROTA (%)	2.15	3.66

A: Audited

Brief standalone financials of AFSL are tabulated below:

Brief Financials (Rs. crore)	FY18 (A)	FY19 (A)
Total operating income	27.32	46.94
PAT	3.21	6.38
Interest coverage (times)	1.41	1.47
Total Assets	145.83	253.16
Net NPA (%)	1.14	1.86
ROTA (%)	2.74	3.20

A: Audited

Status of non-cooperation with previous CRA: Not Applicable

Any other information: Not Applicable

Rating History (Last three years): Please refer Annexure-2

Annexure-1: Details of Instruments/Facilities

Name of the Instrument	Date of Issuance	Coupon Rate	Maturity Date	Size of the Issue (Rs. crore)	Rating assigned along with Rating Outlook
Fund-based - LT-Cash Credit	-	-	-	34.00	CARE BBB+; Stable
Fund-based - LT-Term Loan	-	-	Feb 2022	33.54	CARE BBB+; Stable
Fund-based - ST-Others	-	-	-	5.00	CARE A2
Debentures-Non Convertible Debentures	September 19, 2018	12.60% p.a. fixed	March 19, 2022	27.50	CARE BBB+; Stable

Annexure-2: Rating History of last three years

Sr. No.	Name of the Instrument/Bank Facilities	Current Ratings			Rating history			
		Type	Amount Outstanding (Rs. crore)	Rating	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2019-2020	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2018-2019	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2017-2018	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2016-2017
1.	Fund-based - LT-Cash Credit	LT	34.00	CARE BBB+; Stable	-	1)CARE BBB+; Stable (27-Sep-18) 2)CARE BBB+; Stable (14-Sep-18)	1)CARE BBB; table (05-Oct-17)	1)CARE BBB (29-Aug-16)
2.	Fund-based - LT-Term Loan	LT	-	-	-	-	-	1)Withdrawn (29-Aug-16)
3.	Debentures-Non Convertible Debentures	LT	27.50	CARE BBB+; Stable	-	1)CARE BBB+; Stable (14-Sep-18)	-	-
4.	Fund-based - LT-Term Loan	LT	33.54	CARE BBB+; Stable	-	1)CARE BBB+; Stable (27-Sep-18)	-	-
5.	Fund-based - ST-Others	ST	5.00	CARE A2	-	-	-	-

Note on complexity levels of the rated instrument: CARE has classified instruments rated by it on the basis of complexity. This classification is available at www.careratings.com. Investors/market intermediaries/regulators or others are welcome to write to care@careratings.com for any clarifications.

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an informed investment decision based on the credit risk and their own risk-return expectations. Our rating and grading service offerings leverage our domain and analytical expertise backed by the methodologies congruent with the international best practices.

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