

Vikas Publishing House Private Limited

January 7, 2019

Ratings

Facilities	Amount (Rs. crore)	Rating ¹	Rating Action
Long-term Bank Facilities	70	CARE AA- (SO)*; Stable [Double A Minus (Structured Obligation); Outlook: Stable]	Reaffirmed
Short-term Bank Facilities	12	CARE A1+ (SO)*; (A One Plus, Structured Obligation)	Reaffirmed
Total Facilities	82 (Rupees eighty two crore only)		

Details of instruments/facilities in Annexure-1

* The ratings are based on the credit enhancement in the form of an unconditional and irrevocable Corporate Guarantee from S. Chand And Company Ltd. (SCCL - rated 'CARE AA-' (Stable)/ 'CARE A1+).

Detailed Rationale & Key Rating Drivers

The above ratings are based on the credit enhancement in the form of an unconditional and irrevocable corporate guarantee provided by S. Chand and Company Limited (SCCL) for the bank facilities of Vikas Publishing House Private Limited.

The ratings assigned to the bank facilities and instruments of SCCL takes into account wide experience of promoters and proficient management, established track record, consistent growth in the scale of operations including key strategic acquisitions, favourable financial risk profile underpinned by high profitability and low gearing, established brand name and its strong market position. However, these rating strengths are partially offset on account of its exposure to volatile raw material prices, elongated operating cycle and fragmented industry structure.

Going forward, SCCL's ability to establish its position in new markets (state boards), funding of new acquisitions, stabilization of business operations of companies acquired, maintain its profitability and growth in scale of operations without any adverse impact on its capital structure shall be the key rating sensitivities.

Detailed description of the key rating drivers

Key Rating Strengths

Long track record and established brand name: S. Chand and Company Limited (SCCL) is primarily engaged in publishing and distribution of books. SCCL belongs to S. Chand Group, founded by Late Mr Shyam Lal Gupta has been operational in this segment for a few decades to become one of the leading book publishers in India. SCCL was incorporated as a private limited company on September 9, 1970 and is now headed by Mr Himanshu Gupta, Managing Director. The key management personnel possess significant experience in the Publishing Industry. The day-to-day affairs of the company are looked after by Mr Himanshu Gupta, Managing Director and Mr Dinesh Kumar Jhunjhnuwala, Whole Time Director. SCCL has a well-established market position with a pan India branch network supported by a strong sales team. The company caters to ICSE/ CBSE schools through a pan India network of dealers.

Strategic acquisitions to consolidate existing K-12 publishing segment: SCCL has a strong presence in CBSE/ICSE affiliated schools and growing presence in state board affiliated schools across India. The product offering comprises 59 consumer brands in its repertoire including S.Chand, Vikas, Madhubun, Saraswati, Destination Success and Ignitor. The company has grown organically through development of subject best sellers and introducing new titles to fill portfolio gaps. The inorganic growth through key acquisitions including Vikas Publishing House Private Ltd, New Saraswati House (India) Private Ltd., Chhaya Prakashani Private Limited (CPPL) and the latest proposed acquisition of Chetana Publications LLP has

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

enhanced the product offering thus broadening the target segment. SCCL has a wide network of 6,600 distributors and 58 branches spread across India.

Comfortable financial risk profile: SCCL on a consolidated basis has reported y-o-y growth of 22% in FY18 of which 17% revenue growth has been contributed organically. The growth is attributable to the higher number of students enrolling and shifting to private schools (as compared to government schools) over the past few years with central curriculum (CBSE/ICSE). The growth has additionally come from the strategic expansion of the group into new geographies and markets which covers state boards. The PBILDT margin has marginally contracted from 25.12% in FY17 to 24.91% in FY18 but continues to be healthy. The PAT margin improved from 9.30% in FY17 to 13.37% in FY18 primarily due to lower interest expense as a result of substantial long-term debt being prepaid out of the IPO proceeds to save interest cost and lower depreciation charge as a result on change in policy of charging depreciation from written down value method to straight line method with effect from April 1, 2017. The total debt reduced from Rs.400.44 crore [including working capital loan (CC and WCDL) of Rs.167.15 crore] as on March 31, 2017 to Rs. 176.98 crore [of which working capital loan (CC and WCDL) stood at Rs.143.90 crore] as on March 31, 2018. The overall operating cycle continues to remain high (around 240 days) on account of seasonal and cyclical business. The K-12 sales cycle peaks in Q4 every year and tapers off in Q1 (refers to the period from April 1 to June 30) when the new academic session begins in central curriculum (CBSE/ICSE) schools resulting in high collection period as on balance sheet date.

Liquidity

The company enjoys healthy liquidity position supported by free cash and cash equivalents of Rs.66.48 crore as on March 31, 2018 (consolidated). The average working capital utilization of the company during Q4 (refers to the period from January 1 to March 31) remains between 80%-85% as the sales and debtors peak during this period blocking company's funds towards working capital. Further the company, at a consolidated level, had liquid investments to the tune of Rs.46.76 crore in (valued at cost) in mutual funds as on March 31, 2018.

Key Rating Weaknesses

Volatile raw material prices: The main raw material for SCCL is paper, whose prices have been volatile. The RM cost (including purchase of traded goods) accounts for around 30%-35% of the total operating income. So, the profitability margins of SCCL remain susceptible to the raw material price volatility. SCCL has an integrated procurement process for paper and other raw materials which enables the company to achieve economies of scale with better bargaining power with the suppliers.

Seasonality of business leading to high operating cycle: As SCCL predominantly caters to the education sector, it witnesses maximum demand during the Q4 of the financial year (which precedes start of an academic year in CBSE/ICSE affiliated schools). Consequently, more than 70% of SCCL's annual revenue comes in the last quarter itself. The seasonal nature also causes SCCL's collection period to rise significantly high (more than 200 days) and consequently borrowing levels also remain elevated as on the balance sheet date which subsequently tapers down during ensuing quarter/next financial year as the company start realizing the payments.

Competitive and fragmented industry: SCCL's primary segment is K-12 which accounts for around 80% of the operating income for the group. However this segment is diverse and intensely competitive due to presence of various state boards and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE). A separate body governing each board with a different syllabus provides opportunity to regional, state and local content providers to cater to the respective affiliated schools. There are other established content providers like National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) which also publish subsidized books which are prescribed by schools, especially government schools.

Exposure to Digital transformation and government regulations: The digital transformation requires a significant change in content distribution and the content provider's position between retailers and authors. The digital segment is highly dynamic and the exact trajectory of movement is not known. The inability of SCCL to adapt to the transition faster than its competitors may render its products obsolete or it may lose its competitive edge and market share. Further, free or relatively inexpensive educational products are becoming increasingly accessible, particularly in digital formats and through the internet and some governmental and regulatory agencies have increased the amount of information they make publicly available for free. The government may also limit the consumption of privately published books by a certain section of schools, which may adversely impact the group's revenue and profitability in the short to medium term.

Analytical approach: Consolidated - The rating is based on the consolidated financials of S Chand & Co group comprising of 11 subsidiaries which are either wholly owned or the company exercises significant control. The list of group companies and subsidiaries considered for consolidated financial statements in FY18 are as under:

S. No	Subsidiary	SCCL's Stake (directly or indirectly)
1	Blackie and Sons Private Limited (BSPL)	100.0
2	Nirja Publishers & Printers Private Limited (NPPPL)	100.0
3	Eurasia Publishing House Private Limited (EPHPL)	100.0
4	Vikas Publishing House Private Limited (VPHPL)	100.0
5	Safari Digital Education Initiative P Ltd (SDIPL)	100.0
6	S Chand Edutech P Ltd (SCEPL)	100.0
7	BPI India P Ltd (BPI)	51.0
8	DS Digital P Ltd (DSDPL)	99.9
9	New Saraswati House India P Ltd	100.0
10	Chhaya Prakashani P Ltd	100.0
11	Indian Progressive Publishing Co P Ltd	100.0

Applicable Criteria

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

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

[CARE's methodology for Short-term Instruments](#)

[CARE's Methodology for manufacturing companies](#)

[CARE's Methodology for factoring linkages in ratings](#)

[Financial ratios – Non-Financial Sector](#)

About the Company

Vikas Publishing House Private Limited (VPHPL) was promoted in 1971 by the late Mr C M Chawla. The company was acquired by the S. Chand group in FY13. Presently, SCCL holds 98% stake and Nirja Publishers and Printers Private Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SCCL holds the balance 2% stake in VPHPL. VPHPL is engaged in the publication of college textbooks, school textbooks and books for Universities. It has also undertaken custom publishing for universities. VPHPL publishes school books under the "Madhubun" brand.

VPHPL had a total income of Rs.204.51 crore with PAT of Rs.24.62 crore on a standalone basis in FY18.

About the Guarantor

SCCL belongs to the S. Chand Group of companies which was founded by Late Mr Shyam Lal Gupta and is one of the leading school book and technical book publishers in India. SCCL was incorporated as a private limited company in 1970. SCCL is engaged in the publishing of mainly academic books and other educational services through its subsidiaries. SCCL sells products in the categories of KG to 12th, Higher Education (Technical, Professional, Higher Academic and Competition books) and Early learning (Children). SCCL, through its subsidiaries Safari Digital Education Initiatives Private Limited and DS Digital Private Limited, also offers curriculum and digital learning solutions for private schools.

Brief Financials (Consolidated Rs. crore)	FY17 (A)	FY18 (A)
Total operating income	658.68	800.81
PBILDT	165.45	199.49
PAT	61.26	107.08
Overall gearing (times)	0.68	0.19
Interest coverage (times)	4.68	8.32

A: Audited

Status of non-cooperation with previous CRA: Not Applicable

Any other information: Not Applicable

Rating History for last three years: Please refer Annexure-2

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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In case of partnership/proprietary concerns, the rating /outlook assigned by CARE is based on the capital deployed by the partners/proprietor and the financial strength of the firm at present. The rating/outlook may undergo change in case of withdrawal of capital or the unsecured loans brought in by the partners/proprietor in addition to the financial performance and other relevant factors.

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	-	-	-	70.00	CARE AA- (SO); Stable
Non-fund-based - ST-BG/LC	-	-	-	12.00	CARE A1+ (SO)

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 2018-2019	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2017-2018	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2016-2017	Date(s) & Rating(s) assigned in 2015-2016
1.	Fund-based - LT-Term Loan	LT	-	-	-	1)Withdrawn (10-Nov-17)	1)CARE A+ (SO); Stable (25-Jan-17) 2)CARE A+ (SO) (20-Apr-16)	1)CARE A+ (SO) (15-Apr-15)
2.	Fund-based - LT-Cash Credit	LT	70.00	CARE AA- (SO); Stable	-	1)CARE AA- (SO); Stable (10-Nov-17)	1)CARE A+ (SO); Stable (25-Jan-17) 2)CARE A+ (SO) (20-Apr-16)	1)CARE A+ (SO) (15-Apr-15)
3.	Non-fund-based - ST-Bank Guarantees	ST	-	-	-	-	1)Withdrawn (25-Jan-17) 2)CARE A1 (SO) (20-Apr-16)	1)CARE A1 (SO) (15-Apr-15)
4.	Non-fund-based - ST-BG/LC	ST	12.00	CARE A1+ (SO)	-	1)CARE A1+ (SO) (10-Nov-17)	-	-

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CIN - L67190MH1993PLC071691