

Making our Business more Sustainable and Efficient



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Rajesh Dahiya
Executive Director (Corporate Centre)

Dear Stakeholders,

This is our seventh sustainability report, for FY 2020-21. The Report has been prepared and is being presented to you by applying our collective minds towards ensuring its integrity, upheld by our leadership.

I am grateful to each and every individual of the Axis family – our employees, our contractual employees, their respective families, our vendors and business partners, and indeed, every individual and entity who has played a role in ensuring we remain 'Dil Se Open' to our stakeholders even in the most challenging of times.

The fortitude displayed by Team Axis, guided by our collective focus to remain agile to any emerging challenges and supported by our investments in strengthening our organisational core, ensured we were able to function with minimal disruptions at any point in time during the ongoing pandemic.

With thousands of employees working from home since the past one year, we are cognisant of how important it is to ensure all our employees remain safe, stay positive, and stay connected to the Bank as well as to each other. During the year, through our virtual reach-outs, we covered over 50,000 employees across the country through our employee engagement activities with a special focus on their personal wellbeing, including offering 24x7 counselling, telemedicine and vaccine support, and other such services.

As I write to you, India is cautiously emerging from the devastating second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while the focus has shifted back to ensuring that the maximum number of citizens are vaccinated as quickly as possible, we must remain vigilant. I pray for a quick recovery of all Axis Bank employees who are currently tested positive and offer my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of those whom we lost in this pandemic.

The ongoing pandemic has fundamentally reshaped the traditional work model globally. Since early last year, while we were adopting the work-from-home model and investing in the necessary technologies and capabilities to be able to do so, we were also assessing our longer-term pathways. Our experience so far with the work-from-home model showed that employees could be just as productive, if not more, while working from their homes, with the additional advantages of being safer, saving on their commutes and more in control of their time. This has been the basis of our Future of Work strategy and the launch of GIG-A opportunities that allows us to access talent for a wide variety of roles from across the country and offer them flexible work formats.

Our five core values – Customer Centricity, Ethics, Transparency, Teamwork and Ownership, have remained the North Star guiding our progress. Under the Axis Values Realizers programme launched in October, we have now

created a Values Scorecard that is integrated into the goals of every employee and aims to align their actions with the Bank's values at all times. During the year, we also worked to reinforce the culture of Compliance and Ethics across the Bank, strengthening our governance and systems to ensure all our employees conform to the Bank's Basic Responsibility Framework'. We have significantly scaled up our e-learning capabilities, enabling us to create a longer-term, better-measured learning journeys for our employees.

Our CSR programmes, led directly by the Bank and through the Axis Bank Foundation, touched over a million participants across diverse regions and communities in India. Through the year, we maintained our focus on providing direct COVID-19 relief and support to frontline warriors such as police departments, district authorities and municipal corporations, and to vulnerable communities such as migrant workers and rural women in various parts of the country. We remain fully committed to augmenting our scale of support if the need arises.

Axis Bank Foundation's flagship Sustainable Livelihoods program continued its steady advance towards achieving its Mission 2 Million target, wherein the Foundation has committed to benefiting 2 Million households from 2018 up till 2025. As on 31 March 2021, the Foundation had cumulatively reached 0.92 Million households in close to 200 districts across 25 states in India and is currently working with 23 implementation partners on 28 projects.

This year, we significantly boosted our CSR focus on education. We launched our flagship program in education, Axis DilSe, in the southernmost corner of Manipur, supporting education for the predominantly rural and tribal children of the region, over the next three years. At the other end of the country, we are supporting the development of the unique Museum of Solutions for children in Mumbai. We have also launched the 'Axis Bank Scholars' scholarship program at Ashoka University in Haryana, supporting women from economically weaker backgrounds pursuing STEM degrees at the university.

Our Financial Literacy program for rural women touched over 9 Lakhs participants in the year, augmented by a new, specialised health and sanitation awareness intervention, Axis Sachetana, aimed at supporting participants' preparedness against the COVID-19 pandemic. Project Akshar, our digital financial literacy platform, has reached over 12 Lakhs participants since its launch in 2017.

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pertinent targets around our carbon emissions, resource consumption and greening of our physical infrastructure. We are committed to ensuring that the Bank's future physical infrastructure development conforms to the best sustainability practices and we are crystallising our commitments in this space.

I am especially pleased to share with you the progress we made during the year towards establishing and scaling our ESG-aligned strategy and pathway. Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) imperatives are now being integrated from the Board to the management right down to the departmental and individual levels. The ESG Steering Committee that comprises senior leaders from the Bank is actively championing pertinent ESG deliverables across the Bank.

I am happy to share with you that during the year, we improved our standing across global ESG assessment platforms and benchmarks. We continued to be included in the prestigious FTSE4Good Emerging Markets Index for the fourth consecutive year in 2020, we have also improved our performance on other prominent platforms including the CDP, MSCI ESG Ratings and S&P Dow Jones Sustainability Indices. We aspire to be ESG leaders in our sector and in India and look forward to communicating our journey with you as we progress on our ESG aspirations.

The theme of this report – 'Equitable Economy, Thriving Community, Healthier Planet' is derived from the purpose that we have proposed for ourselves as an organisation, and holds even truer today as we, as individuals, communities, businesses and governments, work together to overcome our challenges.

I am convinced we shall emerge stronger than ever, together. I once again express my gratitude to all my colleagues and partners for keeping the Axis flag flying high.

Regards,

Rajesh Dahiya
ED (Corporate Centre)