

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS AND CSR: A REVIEW OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RAJASTHAN

Aditi Bhupendra Dadhich*
Dr. Shabnam Siddiqui**

ABSTRACT

For many years rural women in Rajasthan have experienced socio-economic exclusion alongside restricted resource access and diminished presence in entrepreneurial sectors. The combined impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and sustainable business models has created new opportunities for empowerment. The narrative review examines the transformation of rural Rajasthan's entrepreneurial sector through CSR initiatives and inclusive business approaches that have enabled women to participate more actively. The paper examines documented cases as well as government initiatives together with NGO partnerships and corporate involvement to chart the transformation of women into essential contributors within local economies. The document shows how CSR efforts support skill development programs along with microfinance initiatives and digital literacy projects and market linkage support. The study explores women-led sustainable businesses that operate using local resources while maintaining environmental responsibility and generating socio-economic benefits. Although advancement has been achieved in women entrepreneurship, significant barriers including scalability limitations, mentorship shortages, and restricted financial access continue to exist. The research provides practical guidelines to reinforce the rural entrepreneurial environment in Rajasthan with collaborative approaches that fit local conditions and align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

KEYWORDS: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainable Business Models, Women Entrepreneurship, UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Digital Literacy.*

Introduction

Rural women in India represent a crucial but neglected workforce segment that mainly operates within informal and agricultural sectors. Entrepreneurship functions as a significant instrument for women's social and economic empowerment through increased income and improved skills while providing better mobility and self-confidence (Tambunan, 2019; Vijayakumar & Naresh, 2013). Deep-rooted socio-cultural norms together with restricted access to finance and limited educational opportunities combined with restricted decision-making power obstruct women's participation in entrepreneurship, particularly in rural regions.

The combination of Rajasthan's large rural population together with its traditional gender roles amplifies these challenges. The 6th Economic Census conducted by MoSPI in 2016 shows that women represent approximately 13.76% of the state's entrepreneurial population. SHGs and government schemes such as NRLM and MUDRA together with NGO-led interventions have transformed opportunities for rural women to establish small businesses in industries like handicrafts, dairy, food processing and textiles (Singh & Mehta, 2020).

Sustainable livelihoods and inclusive development together provide a vital framework for creating enduring income opportunities while supporting marginalized communities.

* Research Scholar, FMS-WISDOM, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India.

** Associate Professor, FMS-WISDOM, Banasthali Vidyapith, Rajasthan, India.

Importance of Sustainable Livelihoods and Inclusive Development

Sustainable livelihoods focus on building durable income sources that support marginalized groups. According to the Department for International Development (DFID) framework (Chambers & Conway, 1992) access to assets combined with institutional support and risk management stands as fundamental. Rural women who adopt sustainable business practices can expand their income streams while maintaining environmental and social health (Desai, 2021). Through inclusive development all societal groups experience gains from economic expansion. Economic empowerment of rural women benefits entire households and communities through improved educational outcomes for children and better access to nutrition and healthcare (UN Women, 2020). The combination of local resources and low capital investment with cooperative ownership in business models provides a sustainable approach to including rural women in economic development (Kabeer, 2012; Singh, 2022). The Companies Act of 2013 requires eligible Indian companies to spend on CSR which has increased private sector investment in social development projects that empower women. CSR programs in Rajasthan have provided women with opportunities for skill development as well as entrepreneurship training while also advancing financial literacy and creating market connections (FICCI, 2022; Hindustan Zinc, 2020). Programs from Vedanta through the Sakhi Program and Tata Trusts' interventions have transformed rural Rajasthani women into micro-entrepreneurs operating in dairy and handicraft sectors. Sustainable business models work alongside CSR by supporting community-focused enterprises that incorporate environmental, economic, and social factors for long-term development. The effectiveness of these sustainable business models stems from their dependence on local supply networks and renewable resources combined with inclusive governance which makes them suitable for rural environments (Elkington, 1998; Bocken et al., 2014). These business models produce dual benefits when incorporated into CSR programs by boosting women's entrepreneurship alongside improved corporate-community relationships.

This narrative review examines how sustainable business models connect with CSR and rural women entrepreneurs in Rajasthan. The review examines academic literature along with government policy documents, CSR reports and case studies relevant to Rajasthan. This study supports multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its research findings which align with the women entrepreneurship

Methodology

The study implements a narrative review approach to investigate how sustainable business models together with CSR initiatives support the empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs in Rajasthan. The research team adopted a narrative review method because of its ability to combine different types of literature such as academic research papers with CSR project reports, policy documents, and NGO case studies for analysis. Through this approach researchers gain thematic insight into complex issues across multiple disciplines such as gender studies, rural development efforts, sustainability practices and corporate social responsibility. Sources were selected based on their relevance to three key criteria: The literature chosen emphasized three main aspects: a geographic focus on Rajasthan, corporate CSR initiatives involvement, and women-led or women-focused entrepreneurial models. The research included peer-reviewed journal articles, government documents, sustainability reports from companies operating in Rajasthan and grassroots organization documentation. Our methodology provides an extensive review that integrates practical applications with policy and development viewpoints.

Defining Key Concepts

• Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India under the Companies Act, 2013

The Companies Act 2013 established CSR as an institutional requirement which transformed corporate responsibility in India. The mandated 2% CSR funding requirement has sparked numerous development projects mostly aimed at underdeveloped rural regions. Mishra and Suar (2019) reveal that CSR initiatives have evolved from philanthropic actions to strategic engagement with a focus on livelihood support and women empowerment. The KPMG India CSR Reporting Survey (2023) showed that top CSR funds allocated over 60% toward education programs, healthcare initiatives and women empowerment during the FY 2022–23. CSR initiatives using participatory rural models achieve better results when they match local needs and utilize existing community frameworks according to Singh and Verma (2021).

In Rajasthan companies like Vedanta, Hindustan Zinc and Hero MotoCorp implemented CSR programs that provided women entrepreneurs with skill training and SHG formation and market linkage opportunities (IndiaCSR, 2024). Several rural blocks have experienced enhanced female income levels alongside improved asset ownership and social mobility because of these projects.

- **Sustainable Business Models: Social, Environmental, and Economic Sustainability**

Sustainable business models for rural women combine livelihood enhancement with environmental stewardship and social inclusivity. According to Bocken et al. (2014) argue that sustainable business models require organizations to develop value propositions and delivery methods that span economic, environmental and social aspects. Rural Rajasthan women entrepreneurs have established businesses that focus on sustainability through herbal products and organic farming as well as solar-powered enterprises and textile crafts (Mehta & Bairwa, 2023).

Prahalad and Hart's (2002) "Bottom of the Pyramid" framework illustrates how business ventures in underserved communities create financial returns along with social benefits. Through decentralized production models supported by CSR initiatives women in SHGs and cooperatives especially from Rajasthan's Dholpur, Banswara, and Barmer regions have been able to benefit (Jain & Sharma, 2022). Green-focused companies have established sustainable livelihood programs that include eco-tourism and watershed management while supporting clean energy business ventures for women (Banerjee & Kar, 2023).

- **Women's Rural Entrepreneurship**

The rise of entrepreneurship among rural women stands out as a transformative force for achieving gender empowerment and driving inclusive economic growth. The obstacles to rural women's entrepreneurship include socio-cultural barriers alongside limited financial access and restricted mobility according to Agarwal & Lenka (2018). Through self-employment initiatives and skill development programs along with peer support networks SHGs, microfinance institutions and NGOs have effectively helped women overcome barriers to entrepreneurship (Kabeer, 2017). CSR-supported capacity-building programs and public-private partnerships create more sustainable women-led enterprises according to research (Dwivedi & Yadav, 2022). The Rajasthan Grameen Ajeevika Vikas Parishad (RGAVP) plays a key role in supporting women entrepreneurs under NRLM which resulted in a 34% income increase for SHG members according to their 2023 Annual Report. Research from Sahoo and Tripathy (2024) demonstrated that structured entrepreneurship development training (EDPs) led to better business continuity and increased innovation and employment generation among women entrepreneurs in handicraft and agri-business sectors.

- **Rajasthan's Socio-Economic Profile**

The rural regions of Rajasthan feature arid terrain along with seasonal employment patterns that trigger extensive population migration. The 2023 Human Development Report for Rajasthan reveals that rural women face substantial disadvantages in educational attainment with female literacy at 56%, digital access availability and job opportunities. Women's economic engagement beyond home responsibilities stays limited by established gender norms particularly in western Rajasthan (UN Women India, 2024).

Multiple programs have successfully enhanced the status of women in rural Rajasthan even though they face numerous constraints. Research by Jha and Beniwal (2021) indicates that targeted livelihood initiatives in Rajasthan's tribal areas such as Udaipur and Dungarpur have successfully incorporated women into agri-related sectors including dairy farming, poultry, and organic vegetable cultivation. The Cairn Enterprise Centre (CEC) in Barmer serves as a leading CSR initiative where more than 15,000 women received business training and support to establish microenterprises in tailoring, handicrafts, and food processing (CEC, 2023).

The research by Kapoor and Vyas (2023) shows rural women entrepreneurs who receive support from CSR-NGO-government partnerships experience improved business longevity coupled with community welfare investments. Entrepreneurship platforms based on technology such as Rajasthan DigiKit and e-SHRAM cards serve as digital bridges that link rural women to both government programs and online marketplaces (Digital India Mission, 2024).

Status and Challenges of Rural Women Entrepreneurship in Rajasthan

The combination of a largely rural population and deep socio-cultural traditions makes Rajasthan a distinctive setting for women to pursue entrepreneurship. Rural women face ongoing obstacles that limit their entrepreneurial progress even though they benefit from supportive policies and growing CSR activities.

- **Current Status**

Rural women in Rajasthan have slowly increased their participation in entrepreneurial activities over the last ten years. The increase in rural women entrepreneurship stems from expanded self-help groups (SHGs) along with digital literacy programs and specific corporate social responsibility (CSR) interventions. The Rajasthan Grameen Aajeevika Vikas Parishad (RGAVP) Annual Report (2023) documented the mobilization of more than 2.4 lakh women into SHGs throughout Rajasthan who started small-scale businesses in dairy production, food processing, handicrafts and tailoring sectors.

Research from 2024 and early 2025 shows digital platforms are increasingly helping rural women grow their businesses. Participants who received e-commerce training through CSR initiatives in Ajmer and Bhilwara districts achieved online product sales through platforms at a rate of 27% which led to greater household income and social mobility according to Jain and Sharma (2024). Despite progress, these advancements only affect CSR-targeted regions without creating broad system-wide transformation.

- **Challenges Faced by Rural Women Entrepreneurs**

- **Socio-Cultural Barriers and Gender Norms:** Traditional gender roles remain a significant barrier. Women encounter opposition from their families and communities when they choose leadership or business positions. Although rural women entrepreneurs establish businesses, their freedom to make decisions remains restricted. The research by Singh and Dadhich (2024) revealed that 64% of surveyed women entrepreneurs in rural Udaipur and Chittorgarh needed male consent to make major financial choices which demonstrates the ongoing influence of patriarchal standards.

Previous research by Agarwal and Lenka (2018) demonstrated how gender identity in rural India creates a "double burden" for entrepreneurs who must manage both business tasks and domestic duties. Further, Kaur et al. According to Kaur et al. (2025), women's entrepreneurship is frequently viewed as a continuation of domestic chores rather than an independent economic pursuit.

- **Financial Exclusion and Credit Constraints:** Among the foremost obstacles for rural women entrepreneurs in Rajasthan is obtaining financial resources. Research by Rathore and Patel (2025) revealed that only 21% of rural women entrepreneurs obtained formal credit through government programs like MUDRA or PMEGP because they faced documentation challenges, debt concerns, and insufficient financial knowledge. Although banks have expanded outreach programs and implemented Jan Dhan Yojana, numerous women still rely on informal money providers or Self Help Group lending for financial needs. Upadhyay and Gupta (2020) pointed out that women receive credit but are frequently dissuaded from using it on their own. The absence of collateral combined with gender bias from loan officers continues to pose major obstacles.
- **Market Access and Supply Chain Barrier:** The marketing struggles of women from remote areas of Rajasthan stem from poor infrastructure and transport systems along with limited market exposure. Mehta and Bairwa (2023) found that women-run businesses have limited growth potential because they operate within extremely small market areas.

Research conducted by Choudhary & Beniwal in 2024 revealed that among 500 women-led rural businesses in Barmer and Jaisalmer 82% of women entrepreneurs had no access to bulk buyers, digital payment systems or branding tools which impaired their business competitiveness and sustainability.

- **Skill Gaps and Entrepreneurial Education:** The reach of vocational training programs has grown but enterprise-specific skills have yet to develop adequately. Desai and Tomar (2024) found that government training programs do not provide skills that match market demand. The study of training programs in Rajasthan's Kota and Dausa districts revealed that market knowledge deficits and mentorship shortages resulted in only 30% of the trained women sustaining their entrepreneurial ventures after six months.

Earlier studies by Joshi & Soni (2021) and Dwivedi & Yadav (2022) support this observation by recommending a transition from livelihood training to entrepreneurship training which includes digital tools, business planning and leadership development.

- **Policy Implementation and Awareness Gaps:** A number of schemes exist to promote women entrepreneurship but rural women seldom receive these benefits because of low awareness levels and administrative obstacles together with insufficient inter-departmental coordination. According to Sharma and Kumawat (2025) district implementation failures restrict policy effectiveness since block-level officers lack proper training to inform women about available scheme benefits.

The findings of Mehta and Bairwa (2023) along with Upadhyay and Gupta (2020) regarding integrated monitoring systems and enhanced outreach mechanisms supported through government-private sector-NGO collaborations are supported by this analysis.

The Role of CSR in Supporting Rural Women Entrepreneurs in Rajasthan

The implementation of CSR as a mandatory requirement for specific companies through the Companies Act, 2013 has transformed CSR into a major force for social and economic integration of rural women across India. Rajasthan has seen numerous leading corporations implement CSR programs that target women's entrepreneurship development and their empowerment through livelihood creation and capacity building. This section analyzes important case examples and assesses the results of CSR interventions targeting rural women entrepreneurs.

• **Case Examples of CSR Initiatives in Rajasthan**

- **Hindustan Zinc Ltd. operates the Sakhi Self-Help Groups:** This initiative is under the Vedanta Foundation to support women in Rajasthan. The Sakhi project by Hindustan Zinc Ltd. stands as one of Rajasthan's most effective CSR models which was launched through the Vedanta Foundation. The project enables women to establish Self-Help Groups (SHGs) while promoting enterprise development and financial inclusion throughout the districts of Udaipur, Rajsamand, and Chittorgarh. As of 2023 Vedanta Foundation reports that 30,000 women joined 2,300 SHGs which resulted in the creation of over 100 micro-enterprises dedicated to tailoring, goat rearing and food processing.

The study conducted by Sharma and Rawat(2024) revealed that 78% of participants experienced enhanced household decision-making authority and improved mobility because of their enterprise income. The Sakhi model combines training programs with credit availability and marketing assistance along with peer network development to serve as the standard for female empowerment in rural mining areas.

- **Coca-Cola India: Parivartan Training Program:** The Parivartan initiative from Coca-Cola India has delivered training to women retailers and small business owners as well as kirana store operators in business planning, inventory management, hygiene and customer service. While operating across the nation, this program has successfully reached more than 800 women in rural Rajasthan with special focus on Alwar and Sikar districts since its launch in 2019. A study by Bhatnagar and Sethi (2022) demonstrated that 55% of women participants showed a 20–30% sales increase after training because they improved product display techniques along with stock rotation and customer interaction. The initiative enabled many participants to advance from operating home-based businesses to semi-formal roadside store setups with family assistance and branding support.
- **ITC e-Choupal and Mission Sunehra Kal:** The Mission Sunehra Kal program stands as a key ITC initiative that promotes inclusive rural development with a focus on women's economic empowerment. The e-Choupal network enables farming and allied businesses to access digital information and Mission Sunehra Kal supports women in SHG formation and acquiring water-based livelihood skills through training. The ITC program in Kota, Bundi, and Tonk enabled more than 5,000 rural women in Rajasthan to start businesses in incense stick making, mushroom farming, and organic manure production. Women involved in these projects achieved a 40% income increase and significantly decreased their financial reliance on male family members as reported by Singh and Chouhan (2023).

Impact of CSR-Backed Skill Training, Digital Literacy, and Market Linkages

The impact of CSR-backed initiatives focused on skill training and digital literacy along with market connections shows substantial benefits. The CSR programs which integrate skill development with digital literacy and market access show more sustainable results than interventions that stand alone. CSR training programs focus on practical market-driven skills while providing continuing support after training completion.

Research conducted by Rajput and Dey (2024) through multiple rural sites in Rajasthan demonstrated that CSR-backed digital literacy programs for women enhanced their confidence and financial literacy which allowed several participants to engage in mobile banking and online transactions and initiate WhatsApp-based business ventures. Initiatives connecting women to collective marketing channels or digital platforms experience higher levels of success. The Hindustan Zinc Foundation collaborated with Amazon Saheli in 2023 to help 160 women artisans market their handcrafted products across the country. By removing intermediaries these platforms establish equitable pricing structures which result in higher profit margins for users. According to a 2025 study by Joshi and Rani CSR programs that employ community mobilization along with ongoing mentorship and technology support result in a 60% improvement in entrepreneurial activity retention after a year compared to single training session programs. The literature stresses that these initiatives require context-specific approaches which take into account regional challenges such as transportation, education systems, caste dynamics and mobility limitations (Verma & Bansal, 2025). The expansion of successful models remains blocked because there is no inter-agency collaboration and existing scalability mechanisms are weak.

Sustainable Business Models and Their Relevance for Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Rajasthan

Sustainable business models (SBMs) achieve long-term value creation for stakeholders by simultaneously integrating social, economic, and environmental objectives and tackling systemic inequities. SBMs serve as a crucial instrument for changing marginalized women into micro-entrepreneurs and community leaders in rural Rajasthan when they are connected with CSR programs and inclusive development approaches.

- **Creating Sustainable Business Models in Rural Environments**

Rural areas implement sustainable business models through community enterprises and cooperatives along with self-help groups which incorporate eco-friendly production methods and digital platforms that enable inclusion and shared ownership while supporting local production chains (Bocken et al., 2014). The models prioritize economic sustainability along with environmental protection and social fairness which directly connects to SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work), and 12 (Responsible Consumption).

According to Goyal and Kaur (2018) SBMs enable women to join the entrepreneurial ecosystem while minimizing financial risks through SHG-led microenterprises and low-cost technology integration. These models enable rural communities to handle resource constraints and gendered roles while operating seasonal livelihoods.

- **Sustainable Business Models and Women's Enterprises in Rajasthan**

Rajasthan has developed sustainable business models which integrate traditional crafts and natural resource management with agro-based economies to establish women-centered enterprises in handicrafts, herbal products, dairy production and solar energy.

- **Handicrafts and Artisanal Work:** The Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation (RSIC) along with NGOs URMUL and SEWA Bharat established sustainable business models in embroidery, blue pottery and handloom weaving through artisan clusters development and eco-friendly production support while ensuring direct market connections (SEWA Bharat, 2021). The SBM models led to an average income increase of 30-40% for over 10,000 women artisans in Barmer and Bikaner districts along with better family decision-making power according to Jain and Bhati (2023).
- **Agro-Based and Dairy Enterprises:** Dairy initiatives modeled after Amul and organic farming projects by the Morarka Foundation in Tonk and Jhunjhunu have created thousands of climate-resilient income opportunities for women. Research conducted by Singh & Kumawat in 2024 discovered that organic spice farming led by women's producer groups yielded 30% greater profits than conventional farming approaches while enhancing both soil health and water conservation.

- **Green Energy and Climate Enterprises:** The adoption of Green Small Business Models (SBMs) is expanding across Rajasthan's dry regions. The Frontier Markets' Solar Sahelis program stands out as a landmark initiative because it teaches women to become clean energy entrepreneurs. By selling and servicing solar lanterns and clean cookstoves women help reduce energy poverty while simultaneously improving gender equality. Frontier Markets (2023) reports that their model has trained more than 10,000 women who now earn monthly salaries ranging from ₹3,000 to ₹8,000. Verma and Solanki (2025) demonstrate how these models support various SDGs and simultaneously enhance women's movement abilities alongside their confidence and leadership skills which are vital for achieving gender transformation.

- **The Impact of the Sustainable Business Models**

Recent research demonstrates that sustainable business frameworks receive support from CSR or development organizations which results in extended entrepreneurship longevity, enhanced personal well-being and decreased gender disparities in income and business ownership (Ravichandran & Sinha, 2021; Bhardwaj & Rathore, 2022). A meta-analysis by Kapoor et al. A 2023 study spanning Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh showed SBM-based enterprises led by women achieved a 70% higher survival rate than traditional or grant-supported businesses after two years. According to the study the success resulted from structured training programs combined with local resource utilization and low startup costs together with collective risk sharing models. The scalability of these models faces limitations from patriarchal norms together with land ownership barriers and inadequate access to digital technology as well as weak supply chain infrastructure (Shukla & Devi, 2024). Research highlights the need for a collaborative ecosystem that includes private sector CSR initiatives alongside government and civil society to achieve sustainable development and establish inclusive financing and mentorship systems.

- **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Sustainable Business Models**

The sustainable business models (SBMs) together with CSR-supported rural women entrepreneurship initiatives in Rajasthan demonstrate substantial links to multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These programs boost economic empowerment for women and support equity as well as environmental stewardship while fostering inclusive development. The following section examines scholarly evidence that connects these interventions to important United Nations SDGs.

- **SDG 1: No Poverty:** Poverty reduction efforts benefit directly from sustainable livelihood programs that include micro-enterprises as well as SHGs and CSR-supported skill development initiatives. Through programs by Hindustan Zinc (Sakhi SHGs) and ITC's Mission Sunehra Kal more than 30,000 rural women have developed income-generating opportunities (Vedanta Foundation, 2023). The research conducted by Jain and Bhati (2023) demonstrated that women involved in SBMs reported monthly income growth between 45–60%, which helped elevate their households above the poverty threshold.

Research by Kapoor et al. Rural women entrepreneurs who followed SBM frameworks developed stronger financial resilience while improving their savings habits and spending more on household health and education according to Kapoor et al. (2023).

- **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** Women entrepreneurs naturally advance gender equality through their increased participation in economic activities and strengthened decision-making roles along with enhanced confidence levels. Goyal & Kaur (2018) found that women participating in CSR-supported ventures gain better bargaining power within their households and disrupt traditional social norms.
- Frontier Markets' Solar Sahelis together with Coca-Cola's Parivartan training initiatives actively empower rural women in Rajasthan by enhancing their mobility and community involvement as well as their individual agency. Verma and Solanki (2025) reported that more than 70% of Solar Sahelis experienced enhanced influence in their family's financial choices and received more respect from their communities. Shukla and Devi (2024) state that such enterprises frequently support women in becoming role models which triggers changes in attitudes toward gender fairness in rural patriarchal settings.
- **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** CSR and SBM initiatives generate sustainable, respectful employment opportunities for rural women that respect local contexts. Sustainable businesses provide consistent income opportunities throughout the

year while offering employees chances to gain new skills and start their own businesses. The India-based evaluation of the ILO-WED's GET Ahead training (2023) demonstrated that women achieve safer employment opportunities with dignity and growth prospects through entrepreneurship-based livelihoods. Women participating in organic spice farming with CSR support in Rajasthan could employ one or two extra workers according to Singh & Kumawat (2024), thereby growing the regional employment sector.

The World Bank report from 2022 acknowledged that Rajasthan's SHG-linked enterprises serve as important contributors to rural economic growth through the support of digital financial services and market access platforms.

- **SDG 10 Reduced Inequality:** SBMs implement strategies to diminish disparities between rural and urban areas and also address gender and socio-economic inequality. These models drive inclusive growth by connecting low-income women who lack land and women from marginalized castes to business value chains. Women-led dairy cooperatives in Tonk and Dholpur districts represent sustainable models that enabled lower caste women to achieve financial equality with upper caste female entrepreneurs for the first time according to Bhardwaj & Rathore (2022). SEWA Bharat's 2021 study demonstrated that collective business models and fair-trade connections help decrease power imbalances in usual supply chains which allows women to negotiate stronger prices and minimize their reliance on middlemen.
- **SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production:** Rural women entrepreneurs in Rajasthan who operate under CSR and SBM frameworks practice eco-friendly methods such as organic farming together with biodegradable packaging solutions and water conservation techniques alongside low-carbon energy utilization. These initiatives align closely with SDG 12. The Morarka Foundation operates organic produce clusters and handloom projects with Uttari *Rajasthan* Cooperative Milk Union Ltd.(URMUL) support that utilize local resources while promoting sustainable materials and traditional skills. Research by Ravichandran & Sinha (2021) demonstrated that these businesses achieved substantial environmental footprint reductions and profit gains through sustainability-based brand marketing. Women-led Frontier Markets distribution of solar technologies promotes clean energy use while reducing kerosene dependence and supports circular economy models.

Policy Recommendations to Key Enablers

The empowerment of rural women entrepreneurs in sustainable business models and CSR necessitates collaborative action from various stakeholders. The role-specific recommendations that follow emerge from the synthesis of research findings and case analyses.

For Corporates and CSR Implementing Agencies

- Corporates and CSR agencies should pursue a strategic CSR direction that supports national development priorities and SDGs instead of using episodic or philanthropic models.
- CSR Implementing Agencies should prioritize skill development programs which meet market needs and receive integrated post-training enterprise support.
- Build connections between markets and provide mentorship along with financial education through cooperative efforts with local NGOs and government bodies.
- Investment in assessment frameworks that evaluate lasting outcomes including income stability and business viability and social empowerment is essential.

For Government (Central and State Level)

- Synchronize CSR-led entrepreneurship programs with government schemes such as NRLM, Skill India, MUDRA, and Startup India.
- Policy incentives for CSR in rural development need enhancement, particularly for enterprise models that consider gender sensitivity.
- Support rural women entrepreneurs by streamlining registration procedures while expanding credit services and establishing rural business incubators.
- Establish district entrepreneurship development cells to deliver comprehensive services which include training modules and mentoring programs along with marketing support and financial assistance.

For NGOs and Civil Society Organizations

- Function as community facilitators who build trust through women mobilization while performing baseline assessments and delivering supportive handholding assistance.
- Develop training modules which teach business abilities alongside social norms and barriers for contextual understanding.
- Create collectives and federations to strengthen bargaining power, social capital and peer support networks for rural women entrepreneurs.

For Academic Institutions and Researchers

- CSR initiatives should work together to deliver entrepreneurship education programs through action research and evaluation studies.
- Create local educational materials and real-world case studies about rural enterprises led by women for vocational training programs and university courses.
- Support policy development with evidence-based research using impact assessments alongside gender audits and longitudinal entrepreneurship outcome studies.

For Financial Institutions and Banks

- Make credit evaluation processes for rural women less complicated while minimizing their paperwork requirements.
- Develop bespoke financial solutions such as revolving credit facilities and working capital financing alongside insurance products that are connected to training outcomes funded by CSR programs.
- Boost financial literacy campaigns by forming collaborations with SHGs and CSR initiatives.

Discussion

The review demonstrates how the integration of sustainable business models with effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities can reshape rural women's entrepreneurship in Rajasthan. The transformation involves multiple aspects which connect strongly to social, economic, and environmental elements. Emerging sustainable business models that utilize local resources and adopt eco-friendly practices along with circular economy principles have proven effective in tackling rural development challenges. The involvement of women in businesses focused on organic farming and solar energy as well as natural resource conservation and waste management shows the compatibility of sustainable practices with entrepreneurship to solve ecological problems and gender inequality. The design of these models includes inherent inclusivity and sensitivity to context which allows rural women with minimal formal education and financial resources to access them (Agarwal et al., 2020). The impact of CSR in empowering women through these models has become increasingly visible in Rajasthan. Hindustan Zinc Limited alongside AU Small Finance Bank and other companies have launched initiatives targeting rural women through skill-building programs and access to markets as well as financial inclusion instead of traditional philanthropy. Through the AU Udyogini program more than 300 women received support to establish eco-friendly micro-enterprises which produced a ripple effect across rural entrepreneurship ecosystems (The CSR Universe, 2025). Rural women-led ventures receive essential resources alongside mentorship and increased visibility through these CSR initiatives. The existence of these optimistic developments is overshadowed by the ongoing presence of multiple systemic obstacles. CSR initiatives remain limited in their effectiveness due to their geographic concentration around corporate headquarters and industrial areas which prevents them from reaching many qualified women. The absence of long-term support after training sessions along with limited access to markets continues to prevent many ventures from achieving scalability and sustainability. Bhati and Upadhyay (2018) observed that women-led businesses begin with enthusiasm but face difficulties evolving from subsistence-level operations to sustainable enterprises because of infrastructural and institutional barriers. The relationship between traditional gender roles and entrepreneurial activities presents significant considerations. Rural women face mobility restrictions and ownership barriers due to persistent socio-cultural norms which further complicate their decision-making processes. Numerous CSR programs have integrated gender sensitization into their operations yet the extent of transformation continues to develop at a gradual pace. The integration of women into value chains in roles such as producers or vendors and leadership positions yields substantial empowerment results. The review

shows that CSR initiatives which work together with government programs (such as NRLM or RSLDC) and civil society organizations create more lasting effects. Integrated programs deliver training and resources while establishing platforms that enable women to reach markets and enter policy spaces and digital tool access points which are vital to current entrepreneurial success. The review concludes by establishing that women's contributions to sustainable development through entrepreneurship continue to gain significant recognition. Although there is undeniable progress, we must focus on institutionalizing proven models and replicating them throughout districts while building supportive policy and social systems that enable rural women to transition from economic participation to leadership roles.

Conclusion

The study illustrates how sustainable business models and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives used to empower women in rural Rajasthan can produce transformative results for gender equality and regional economic resilience. When Corporate Social Responsibility programs merge with entrepreneurship development through a long-term sustainable approach they can move women from marginalization into active participation in mainstream economics.

CSR-funded programs by Hindustan Zinc, Coca-Cola India, and ITC have empowered women to engage in profitable activities while building their self-confidence and developing leadership abilities in their communities. The initiatives make important contributions to multiple SDGs including SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 8 (Decent Work). Even though women-led enterprises have achieved progress through various programs women still face ongoing obstacles including traditional cultural norms and insufficient digital access which prevent them from establishing sustainable businesses. This analysis indicates a requirement for joint activities between businesses, governmental bodies, and social organizations to establish a strong entrepreneurial environment. Rural women require support from an ecosystem that offers skills development and financial assistance as well as technology access and market connections alongside ongoing capacity building programs. Such measures enable women-led entrepreneurship to become an ordinary and enduring aspect of the business landscape. Through strategic alignment and inclusive design CSR and sustainable business models have the power to transform rural Rajasthan into a gender-inclusive entrepreneurial system. The full potential of participatory models requires them to be scalable and impact-driven as standard business practices instead of rare occurrences.

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