

# STRATEGIC EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ENERGY SECTOR CSR: A STUDY ON SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Rudy Tobing<sup>1\*</sup>, M. Rezki Oktavianoor<sup>2</sup>, Arief Yulianto<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Business & Finance, Universitas Media Nusantara Citra, Jakarta, Indonesia\*

Email: rdtobing@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Business & Finance, Universitas Media Nusantara Citra, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: rezkioktav@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Creative Industries, Universitas Media Nusantara Citra, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: r.ariefyulianto@gmail.com

\*Corresponding Author

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores how corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the energy sector can move beyond short-term aid to become a strategy for long-term community empowerment. Using a qualitative case study of the ME–Rumah Asri program in Hilir Muara Village, the research positions women as central agents of change. The study aims to map the empowerment process, assess the social, economic, and environmental outcomes experienced by residents, and link them to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 8, 11, and 17). Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and document analysis; thematic analysis was applied by extracting core ideas, clustering them into themes, articulating inter-theme linkages, and validating findings with informant while maintaining source triangulation and research ethics. The findings highlight three key insights. First, programs designed with early resident involvement foster self-confidence, strengthen decision-making capability, and build a sense of ownership. Second, tangible outcomes include additional household income, stronger social cohesion, and everyday pro-environment habits. Third, empowerment functions as the bridge between CSR interventions and sustainability outcomes, while reinforcing the company's social legitimacy to operate. A noted challenge is initial dependence on corporate support; thus, a phased transition plan, stronger community/enterprise institutions, safe financing access, and diverse marketing channels are needed. Overall, when energy-sector CSR is framed as women-centered empowerment within cross-stakeholder partnerships, both social impact and sustainability improve, and program benefits endure.*

**Keywords:** Energy CSR, Women's Empowerment, Social Impact, Sustainability; SDGs

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The energy sector in Indonesia plays an important role in supporting national development, but its business activities also often have significant social and environmental impacts. Therefore, *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) practices in the energy sector not only serve as a corporate legitimacy strategy, but also as a means of community empowerment and achieving sustainability. This study aims to understand how Mubadala Energy's CSR can make community empowerment a strategic one, not merely philanthropic assistance, but a long-term strategy that strengthens community capacity, improves quality of life, and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (decent work & economic growth), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals).

The energy industry drives economic growth, but its social and environmental footprint is real. Therefore, CSR in the energy sector cannot stop at donations or ceremonies. It needs to move towards community empowerment: building capacity, opening opportunities, and establishing equal partnerships. This framework is in line with the idea that CSR should ideally be more than just a social license, but rather a shared value strategy (Visser, 2017).

This study highlights Mubadala Energy's CSR program as a concrete example of how women in coastal areas are developing skills, expanding support networks, and building self-confidence. The main focus describes tangible changes at the community level, namely more decent and sustainable employment opportunities, growing social resilience through mutual assistance and group organization, and more responsible environmental management practices in daily life. The direction of this study is in line with the objectives of SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

Several recent studies reinforce these findings in Ghana, where CSR programs in the oil and gas sector are more effective when the voices and experiences of citizens are the main reference in designing activities. (Mohammed et al., 2022) . Another finding is that CSR strategies that address energy poverty can have a ripple effect on household welfare (Batool et al., 2023) . At the governance level, the government acts as a guide so that CSR does not stop at philanthropy but is integrated with the development agenda (Wirba, 2024) . In the energy transition landscape, *social license to operate* (SLO) demands justice and tangible benefits at the local level (Maonaigh et al., 2025) .

The purpose of this study is to understand the empowerment process at ME-Rumah Asri, the social impacts felt by residents, and its contribution to sustainability achievements. The research questions in this study are as follows: How do CSR strategies promote *empowerment*, what are their impacts on the community, and how are they related to the SDGs?

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study selected Mubadala Energy CSR program, ME-Rumah Asri, located in Hilir Muara Village, Pulaulaut Sigam District, Kotabaru Regency, South Kalimantan as the research site. This research method uses a qualitative approach with a work map using operational variables. The data sources in this study are primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with informants, namely *Community Development Officers* (CDOs) who are actively involved in the program. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from the 2024 ME-Rumah Asri activity report. In this research design, each stage, from the selection of informants to the analysis of findings, was directed at four categories, each with its own indicators, namely 1) CSR Strategy; 2) Community Empowerment; 3) Social Impact; and 4) Sustainability Outcomes. The selection of informants was done *purposively* to determine the process of program development, program implementation, and validation of the desired social impact by Mubadala Energy as the owner of the CSR program. Thus, the data collection process did not take place in a vacuum, but followed a clear roadmap: corporate social responsibility strategy (commitment, compliance, sustainability, partnership), community empowerment (participation, skills improvement, group capacity, control and decision-making), social impact (family welfare, economic benefits, solidarity, access to services), and sustainability outcomes (long-term economic opportunities, environmentally friendly behaviour, intergenerational benefits, and links to Sustainable Development Goals). This framework is written in the appendix and serves as a direct reference in compiling interview guidelines and a document data extraction matrix so that each indicator is answered in the field and linked back to the research objectives.

In semi-structured in-depth interviews, questions are developed from key indicators. For corporate strategy, the interviewer explored the *Community Development Officer's* (CDO) account of the form of commitment (e.g., continuity of assistance and company presence after training), the suitability of the program to the coastal village context (shift from farming to stilt houses and plant

houses), the sustainability of the program through independence targets, and cross-party partnerships as perceived by residents. This series of questions and answers falls under the CSR Strategy category, so that each statement from the source can be positioned on the appropriate indicator. For the *Community Empowerment* category, the interview guidelines explore the CDO's experience in the process of recruiting group members, training in skills that are truly added value (cultivation methods, ordering raw materials, simple financial record keeping, packaging, marketing, and order management), organizational capacity born of role sharing, work schedules, common rules, and control and decision-making that ultimately shifts to the hands of the community. Field narratives about the courage to set prices, choose marketing channels, and manage family production rhythms are positioned as living proof of these indicators. In the *Social Impact* category, interviewers did not only ask about monetary value, but also how family well-being is felt in the kitchen and at the household decision-making table. How do economic benefits add breathing room to daily finances, how does solidarity grow, for example, through sharing seeds, equipment, or taking turns looking after children during production, and does involvement in the program facilitate access to relevant social services (such as sales space in local retail outlets or business service assistance)?

In the *Sustainability Outcomes* category, the interview guidelines explore long-term economic opportunities (e.g., stability of demand, opportunities for product diversification), sustainable environmental practices that are taking root (pesticide-free, organic waste management, reduction of single-use packaging), intergenerational benefits anticipated by residents, and the extent to which these practices are linked to relevant SDGs. Supporting documents included training implementation reports, business license management, activity photos, and monitoring and evaluation results. Each item was checked for consistency with the results of interviews conducted with CDOs. In this way, the documents became evidence that reinforced the CDOs' statements. Following data collection, thematic analysis was carried out through coding (extracting units of meaning from quotes, events, and documents) in accordance with the four predetermined categories. This process ensures that the final findings not only "feel right" but are clearly linked to indicators from the categories of corporate strategy, empowerment, social impact, and sustainability outcomes. In this way, the methodological framework and analytical tables worked in tandem; the tables provided direction for data collection and interpretation, while the field data populated and validated the tables.

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Categories  
 Source: Author., 2025

Categories	Indicators	Example Questions	Reference Sources
<b>CSR Strategy</b>	Company Commitment	The company consistently supports sustainable community empowerment programs.	Carroll (1991); Porter & Kramer (2006)
	Program Suitability	CSR programs are tailored to the needs of local communities.	Jamali & Karam (2018)
	Program sustainability	CSR programs have a long-term impact on the community.	Carroll (1991)
	Stakeholder collaboration	CSR programs involve the participation of various stakeholders (government, NGOs, community).	Porter & Kramer (2006)
<b>Community Empowerment</b>	Participation	I am actively involved in the ME-Rumah Asri program activities.	Zimmerman (2000); Perkins & Zimmerman (1995)
	Skill improvement	The CSR program has improved my skills in managing a business/household.	Laverack (2006)

Categories	Indicators	Example Questions	Reference Sources
<b>Social Impact</b>	Community organizational capacity	The program improves the ability of community groups to manage activities.	Zimmerman (2000)
	Control & decision-making	Communities have opportunities in program decision-making.	Perkins & Zimmerman (1995)
	Social welfare	CSR programs improve my family's welfare.	Wood (1991); Burdge & Vanclay (1996)
	Economic benefits	CSR programs provide additional income for families/communities.	Goyal & Kumar (2017)
<b>Sustainability Outcomes</b>	Social solidarity	The program enhances cooperation and a sense of community within society.	Burdge & Vanclay (1996)
	Access to services	CSR programs facilitate community access to social facilities.	Wood (1991)
	Sustainable economy	CSR programs help create long-term economic opportunities.	Elkington (1997); Bansal (2005)
	Environmental sustainability	CSR programs pay attention to environmental sustainability.	Elkington (1997)
	Long-term impact	CSR programs provide long-term benefits for future generations.	Dyllick & Muff (2016)
	Support for SDGs	CSR programs support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	Bansal (2005); Dyllick & Muff (2016)

### Community Empowerment Process through the ME–Rumah Asri CSR Program

In summary, these variables resulted in a formulation, namely the development of interviews with Mubadala Energy's *Community Development Officer* (CDO) to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the ME–Rumah Asri corporate social responsibility (CSR) program is implemented, from planning, training, and mentoring to the impact felt by residents. These findings enrich the research framework by linking CSR strategies, community empowerment processes, and the social impacts and sustainability outcomes arising from field practices. The following narrative actively describes this process with a human-centered focus; it also implies the research flow from the initial stage to the resulting outputs.

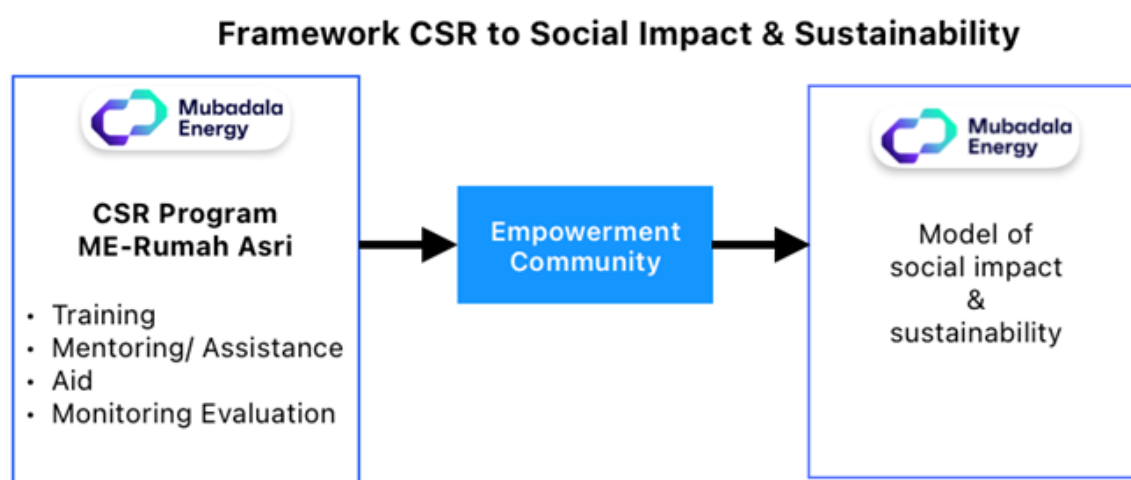


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Implementation Process of CSR ME-Rumah Asri  
 Source: Author., 2025

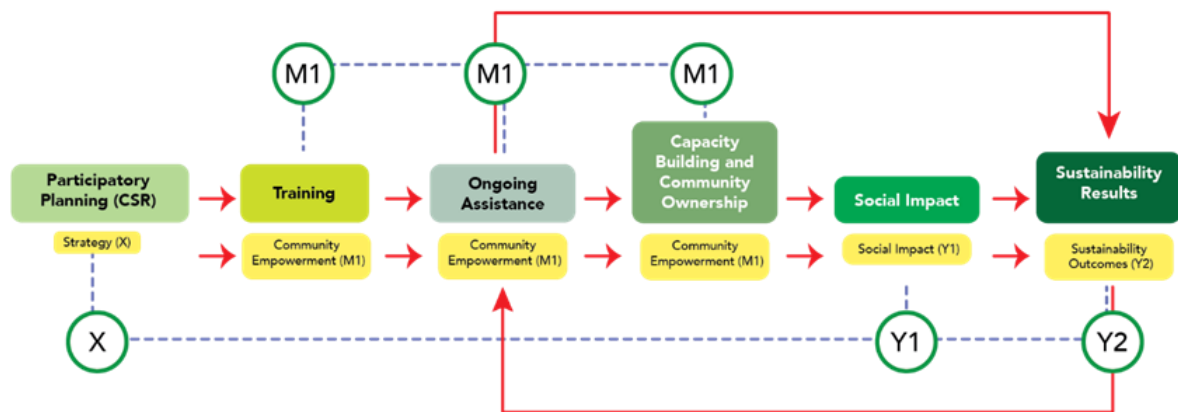


Figure 2. Qualitative Research Flow with Operational Variables  
 Source: Author., 2025

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS



Figure 3. The online interview process with the Community Development Officer (CDO) of Mubadala Energy and the reviewers  
 Source: Author., 2025

#### Planning and Initiation: Laying the Groundwork with Residents (X)

During the planning stage, the company involved residents from the outset to ensure that activities were in line with local needs. The CSR team conducted social mapping and participant screening to find residents who already had a habit of growing crops in their yards. This approach fostered a sense of ownership and reduced resistance, as residents felt that the program was born out of their real needs. From this process, nine women were selected as the first group to receive assistance;

they received basic financial support to start planting. The initial vegetable harvest was used to meet household needs, and the surplus was sold to local vegetable vendors, so that this simple habit slowly became a source of additional income. Referring to the poverty alleviation program, this program is included in the strategy to reduce the burden of community expenses. The limited amount of dry land in coastal villages was overcome in a creative way: residents and the company built a "Rumah Asri" greenhouse on swampy land using a platform construction. This building, measuring approximately 9×11 meters, is connected by a small bridge, making it safe to access. The location is also in a residential area. This adaptation to geographical conditions shows that the program is relevant to the environmental context. From the outset, the company's strategy emphasized long-term commitment, and the suitability of the program is evident from the investment in cultivation facilities that enable sustainable activities. *The greenhouse* has become the centre of residents' farming activities, with a daily production process organized according to a group schedule.

### **Continuous Training and Mentoring: Building Capacity and Confidence (M1)**

During the implementation phase, training and continuous mentoring are key. The CDO does not simply inaugurate and then abandon the program; he ensures intensive and continuous mentoring so that skills are put into practice. In addition to leaf vegetable cultivation techniques, participants acquire a complete set of business skills: how to order seeds online on *the marketplace*, simple bookkeeping, family and business financial management, marketing strategies, and even managerial skills to organize group roles and work schedules. This close and regular mentoring prevents the program from becoming merely ceremonial; residents are truly accompanied when facing daily problems ranging from pests, seed stocks, packaging, to managing the rhythm of harvest (Visser, 2017). As a result, residents' confidence grows. Women become more confident in making business decisions: trying out product variations based on buyer preferences, using affordable marketing channels, setting and negotiating prices with confidence, and scheduling production to align with family circumstances. This is a sign that control is in the hands of the community; they are no longer recipients of aid but managers who determine the direction of their own businesses (Afnan et al., 2025) .

### **Community Empowerment and Program Ownership (M1)**

Over time, the initial group evolved into a community organization that collectively operates *the Greenhouse*. Participation expanded from nine people to around thirty-five, then solidified into twenty-two active members who were truly ready and consistent (Batoool et al., 2023) . The group established a division of roles and responsibilities, selected the most prepared members to manage operations, and implemented mutually agreed internal rules. Through discussion, they decided to focus on lettuce and pakchoi because these two types were most in demand in the market, even though many types of vegetables were initially tried. They also agreed to introduce the brand "Healthy Vegetables without Pesticides" and open marketing channels in local minimarkets such as Winmart and GS MiniMarket, so that the products would be easily accessible (Wirba, 2024) . These steps marked the birth of a sense of ownership. The program was seen as "belonging to everyone"; residents felt entitled and responsible for its continuity. In line with this, the program's goal was clearly stated: if one day the company was no longer there, the *Greenhouse* activities would continue under the management of the residents. The mission was clear: to improve the competence of the participants from workers to managers. With this foundation, in 2023 the community successfully transformed a simple planting house into *a permanent greenhouse*, a milestone that signifies their readiness to stand more independently (Maonaigh et al., 2025) .

## Tangible Social Impact and Sustainability Outcomes (Y1) (Y2)

Integrating interviews with the research framework shows that the empowerment process has generated real social impacts and paved the way for sustainability outcomes. Economically, greenhouse businesses, even on a household scale, provide stable additional income. Production of around 50 packs of vegetables every two weeks at a price of around eight thousand rupiah per pack adds breathing room to daily expenses. This additional income also increases bargaining power within the family, as women contribute to the household income and have a stronger foundation when making household decisions. The entrepreneurial experience they gain opens up long-term economic opportunities, whether it be expanding product types, adding market channels, or becoming a reference for other residents. Socially, the program strengthens community bonds and mutual support networks. Members share seeds and tools and look after each other's children when one of them must focus on production. Social capital such as trust and cooperation does not grow easily without long-term shared experiences. Organizational capacity at the community level has also increased; the group is now better prepared to initiate joint activities outside the greenhouse because they are accustomed to formulating rules, dividing roles, and solving problems together. Environmentally, the habit of farming without pesticides introduces practices that are healthier for the environment and consumers. At the same time, the habit of sorting and utilizing waste is beginning to take root, for example, for composting or reducing single-use packaging. These behavioural changes stem from the residents' own agreement, not external coercion, making them more likely to be sustainable. All these changes mark increasingly apparent sustainability outcomes. Because ownership and capacity have shifted to residents, the *greenhouse* initiative can survive and grow, strengthening the village's economic resilience in the long term. Company activities need to consider market trends, which indicate that consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by how effectively a company demonstrates its commitment to sustainability (Tjan, S. & Tobing, R., 2024). The company's strategy of leaving behind independent community business units ensures that the benefits of the program do not stop when corporate support wanes but continue to flow to future generations. More broadly, this story supports the SDGs:

- 1) **Goal 8** : Decent work and economic growth through the creation of dignified jobs for women and additional family income;
- 2) **Goal 11**: Sustainable cities and communities through strengthened social resilience and environmentally friendly behaviour;
- 3) **Goal 17**: Partnerships for the Goals through exemplary equal partnerships between the company and residents.

Table 2. Interview Results Notes  
Source: Author., 2025

Stages	Notes
The beginning of the CSR program at Rumah Asri	Initially, gardening was done in the yard to meet household needs. The produce was then sold to vegetable vendors. Initially, there were 9 people who were given planting costs.
Location of Rumah Asri	Rumah Asri was built on swampy land in the form of a stilt house (planting house), due to limited land for planting by CSR members as a greenhouse. Access to Rumah Asri is via a wooden bridge.
Greenhouse Area	Area: 9 m <sup>2</sup> x 11 m <sup>2</sup>
What is provided to residents	Business mentoring, knowledge and understanding in using email, opening online shopping accounts, bookkeeping and finance, marketing and managerial skills
	1. Training in vegetable farming skills

Stages	Notes
Community Development Officer (CDO) performs the following tasks:	2. Business assistance related to finance, marketing, production and other matters
Success program indicators	Intensive and continuous Non-ceremonial No reports No assistance
Profile CDO, Gema Starliantri	Background: Bachelor of Science in Forestry, University of Gajah Mada, recruited as Com Dev Officer. Community Development Background
Program Objectives for 2021	Crop cultivation: Lettuce and Pakchoy
Program Objectives for 2023	Convert to a greenhouse
Activities at Rumah Asri Tanam	Initially, there were many vegetable options, but market demand was only for pak choy and lettuce. The products are known as "Healthy Vegetables Without Pesticides."
Product Marketing Entering Minimarkets	Currently, the products are available at WinMarket and GSmarket in Kota Baru
Production	50 packs per two weeks @ Rp.8,000
Mechanism for selecting organizational managers	Begins with screening individuals who meet the competency requirements to operate the greenhouse
Objective of Mubadala CSR	Rumah Asri will be able continue the daily business activities even if the company ceases operations. Enhancing the competencies of residents who are empowered as workers and trained as managers Reducing family consumption for vegetables costs through ability to produce grown in family-owned gardens. Furthermore, building family economic strength through opportunity sale of vegetable products to traders/ the surrounding community.
Social Empowerment set up	The formation of Pokdarlis or Environmental Awareness Groups that oversee Rumah Asri, which runs greenhouse activities
Data on Pordalis or Environmental Awareness Groups	In 2021, there were 9 members In 2022, there were 35 members. In 2023, there were 22 members
Empowerment mechanism for family strength	Creating family savings in the form of reduced vegetable consumption costs Income opportunities through vegetable sales and supply activities 5 planting media
Participants per family per year at Rumah Asri receive	Pots Seedlings Personal consumption Non-cash (cash subsidy): usually there is money to ensure success
How does Rumah Asri recruit its members	Social screening is used to determine potential participants and reduce resistance to participation: 1. Observing/monitoring residents in the surrounding area who already have gardens in their yards 2. Personal approach and interviews 3. Assessment and offering program membership. 4. Approved as a member of Rumah Asri
How Rumah Asri conducts program monitoring	Conducting reviews and screenings for participants who continue to follow the program and those who do not follow the Rumah Asri program. It was found that some participants no longer plant because they lack motivation to continue the program and have run out of funds to run the program independently.
CSR Strategy Stages Implemented by Rumah Asri	1. Mubadala Energy implements its CSR strategy and annual plan. 2. The company, through the CDO, conducts social mapping 3. The CDO and the community set achievement targets as a baseline for the projects being implemented



Stages	Notes
	4. Community assistance by the CDO 5. Program monitoring by the CDO
Rumah Asri is open to the public	Rumah Asri is open for tours on Saturdays and Sundays, as residents generally work or engage in other activities on other days

The following presents the table compiled field data,

Table 3. Field Data  
Source: Author., 2025

Categories	Indicator	Sample Questions	Source
CSR Strategy	Company Commitment	The program runs from 2021 to 2025. Consistency in allocating funds for activities with the same objectives	Interview with CDO
	Program suitability	Based on the results of social mapping, it was found that housewives do not have jobs and do not have income that provides added value. Their husbands mostly work as fishermen. In addition to reducing the burden of expenses, the program also provides income.	Interview with CDO
	Program sustainability	The independence of members of the Asri Environmental Awareness Group in implementing the program has been prepared since 2025, through managerial training and selection of administrators based on their activity.	Interview with CDO
	Stakeholder collaboration	This program involves the head of Hilir Muara village, UGM as the implementer of Social Mapping, and the provision of CDO personnel	Interview with CDO
Community Empowerment	Participation	The Pokdarlis members initially numbered only 9 people, increased to 35 people, and then adjusted to 22 people	Interview with CDO
	Skill improvement	Pokdarlis members' ability to order seeds through Shopee, record finances from each production and sales activity	Annual Program Activity Report to Mubadala Energy
	Community organization capacity	Fund management and transparency of 10% of sales proceeds, Scheduling of Greenhouse operational shifts	Interview with CDO
	Control & decision-making	Decision-making in Pokdarlis regarding the status of inactive members	Interview with CDO
Social Impact	Social welfare	Reducing family expenses by producing vegetables for daily needs	Interview with CDO
	Economic benefits	Previously had no income, now generates income from vegetable sales	Interview with CDO
	Social solidarity	Mutual assistance in the planting process for new members who have joined and started businesses in their own yards	Interview with CDO
	Access to services	Greenhouse is open to the public every Saturday and Sunday. In addition to	Interview with CDO

Categories	Indicator	Sample Questions	Source
Sustainability Outcomes (Y2)		selling, it also provides education for residents from outside Hilir Muara Village to implement the same program	
	Sustainable economy	Already has a regular market, namely regular supplies to local minimarkets (Winmart and GS)	Interview with CDO
	Sustainable environment	A combination of soil and hydroponic planting systems, as well as no use of pesticides, is a commitment to protecting the environment. The greenhouse concept, which uses platforms above swampy ground, is also a tangible manifestation of this program, which does not damage existing habitats	Interview with CDO
	Long-term impact	Becoming a model for effective CSR programs that can be implemented elsewhere	Interview with CDO
	Support for SDGs	SDGs 8, 11, 17	Annual Report on Program Activities to Mubadala Energy

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study shows that corporate CSR programs designed from the outset in collaboration with residents, accompanied by appropriate training and ongoing assistance, can transform beneficiaries into confident and empowered managers. Women in Hilir Muara Village no longer simply participate in activities, but dare to make daily business decisions, choosing a variety of products, determining prices, organizing production rhythms, and trying affordable sales channels because their voices have been valued since the planning stage and their needs have been used as the main reference. These findings confirm that involvement from the outset fosters a sense of ownership, so that participation flows naturally and sustainably. The impact is visible across three areas. Economically, additional income from home businesses provides breathing room for families. Socially, community cohesion increases due to the practice of sharing materials, equipment, and even taking turns looking after children during production. Environmentally, new habits of reducing single-use packaging, sorting, and utilizing waste are beginning to form. This layered pattern shows that empowerment not only increases capacity but also shapes relationships between citizens and more responsible daily habits. Empowerment then acts as a bridge connecting corporate intervention with sustainable results: more diverse income, broader market networks, and consistent pro-environmental behavior. At the level of sustainable development goals, these achievements support decent work and economic growth, strengthen community resilience, and reinforce cross-sector partnerships. Thus, when corporate social responsibility programs are directed as women- -based empowerment strategies, social and sustainability impacts increase, and program benefits are more durable. However, this study also notes several challenges. In the early stages, residents tend to rely on corporate support. Therefore, a gradual independence plan needs to be prepared early on so that the transition runs smoothly and the benefits of the program do not stop when corporate support diminishes.

First, strengthen the planning process with stakeholders from very beginning through open discussions, activity trials, and cost transparency. This approach has been proven to reduce social resistance, foster a sense of ownership, and strengthen community acceptance of company activities. In addition to outcome indicators, use process indicators such as participation, initiative, and decision-making ability to assess progress at each stage. Ensure the presence of regular evaluation forums that allow for two-way feedback, keeping the program consistent and sustainable.

Second, establish a clear and gradual path toward independence. Start by strengthening community institutions, role sharing, financial management, and agreed work rules, then expand access to safe and affordable financing through partnerships with relevant institutions accompanied by financial literacy. At the same time, diversify marketing channels, including local markets, retail partners, collective orders, and online sales channels, so that residents do not depend on one party.

Third, provide continuous assistance until the group is truly established in managing the business. Close and regular assistance not only strengthens skills but also maintains the rhythm of learning, trying, and improving, which is the foundation of independence. When organizational capacity and decision-making control are firmly in the hands of the community, the company's role can be gradually transferred without disrupting the continuity of activities.

Finally, align all steps to relevant sustainable development goals. Decent work arrangements, strengthening resilient communities, and equitable partnerships will ensure that the benefits of the program are felt now and passed on to the next generation.

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