

UN GCNI Newsletter

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India Inc yet to build capabilities for net zero shift: IMT- UNGCNI study

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New Delhi: A new study on India's sustainability transition found that while the corporate sector is increasingly embracing sustainability, it still lacks the skills and organisational capacity needed to translate climate commitments into real action.

The report, 'Building India's Net Zero Capability: Industry Readiness and Skills', prepared by IMT Ghaziabad in collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact Network India (UNGcNI), was launched here by Atish Chattopadhyay, Director IMT, and Ratnesh Jha, Executive Director UNGcNI.

From Convening to Conversion

The first quarter of 2026 marked a decisive shift in UN Global Compact Network India's journey—from enabling dialogue to driving measurable action and outcomes. Across its three strategic pillars—Equip, Catalyze, and Advance—UN GCNI deepened its role as a convener of business leadership and a catalyst for systemic change.

Through flagship platforms such as the Gender Equality Summit, high-impact sectoral initiatives like the NDC Just Transition work in cement, and national consultations under Ocean Centres India, the quarter brought together leaders across government, industry, finance, and civil society to align on shared priorities and accelerate implementation pathways.

At the same time, focused efforts on participant engagement, regional industry platforms, and grassroots interventions: from strengthening STEM education pathways for women to advancing climate-resilient agriculture practices; ensured that impact was both top-down and bottom-up. These initiatives bridged the gap between boardroom commitments and on-ground transformation, enabling businesses to translate intent into measurable action while engaging communities and local ecosystems more meaningfully.

Q1 2026 signals a clear and decisive direction forward:

UN GCNI is not only convening conversations—it is actively shaping commitments, enabling cross-sector partnerships, and strengthening accountability mechanisms. By doing so, it continues to advance a compelling business case for sustainability in India, positioning companies as key drivers of inclusive growth, resilience, and long-term value creation.





EQUIP COMPANIES TO ACT

ESG & Sustainability Leadership Summit – Chennai Regional Edition

(UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) in collaboration with SAIRAM Institutions)

The ESG & Sustainability Leadership Summit – Chennai Regional Edition was not positioned as a standalone convening, but as a strategic intervention by UN GCNI to drive tangible action on climate, ESG, and responsible supply chains within Southern India’s industrial ecosystem. At a time when businesses are navigating intensifying climate risks, regulatory pressures, and supply chain disruptions, the summit brought together leaders to move beyond awareness towards implementation and accountability.

Anchored in the urgency of “SDG shocks,” the discussions focused on how companies can embed ESG into core business strategy, particularly across value chains—where the real impact lies. The summit enabled a shift from intent to action by equipping businesses with practical pathways on climate resilience, sustainable finance, and ESG compliance, while also highlighting the critical role of supply chains in driving inclusive and low-carbon transitions. As a result, the initiative strengthened regional leadership readiness and catalysed collaborative, scalable approaches for building resilient, future-ready, and SDG-aligned businesses, reinforcing UN GCNI’s commitment to driving systemic change beyond events into sustained impact.



9th Gender Equality Summit 2026

UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI) in collaboration with ReNew

The 9th Gender Equality Summit (6 March 2026, New Delhi) was designed as a strategic leadership platform to move gender equality from commitment to core business execution. In the context of rapid technological disruption and evolving workforce dynamics, UN GCNI positioned the summit to equip corporate leaders with the capabilities required to embed gender-responsive practices within future-ready, resilient business models.

Bringing together over 200 senior leaders across government, UN agencies, industry, and academia, the summit went beyond dialogue to enable practical integration of gender equality into strategy, operations, and decision-making. Through focused engagements—including an Executive Masterclass on navigating AI-led transformation—the platform strengthened corporate understanding of how gender equality intersects with innovation, productivity, and long-term competitiveness.





Participant Capacity Building & Engagement

UN GCNI has set a decisive and action-oriented tone in 2026, strengthening participant engagement while driving greater accountability and business readiness on sustainability. Through a structured approach combining onboarding, targeted knowledge exchange, and hands-on advisory support, the network has expanded both in scale and depth, welcoming 31 new participants and 21 rejoinders in Q1, while actively engaging over 80 companies through focused interventions.

A standout achievement has been the 95.8% CoP submission rate, reflecting a high level of discipline, commitment, and alignment with the UN Global Compact principles. Collectively, these efforts have significantly enhanced participant readiness to embed sustainability into core business strategy, governance, and operations, reinforcing UN GCNI's role in driving credible, accountable, and implementation-focused ESG action across Indian industry.

DigiArivu Empowering Students Through Technology

The DigiArivu – Empowering Students Through Tech initiative, implemented by the United Nations Global Compact Network India in partnership with Samsung, reflects a strategic shift towards building future-ready talent pipelines through early STEM and digital education. Positioned beyond a traditional CSR intervention, the programme is designed to strengthen grassroots learning ecosystems by integrating technology, experiential education, and holistic student development across government schools in Tamil Nadu.

By establishing STEM labs, enabling hands-on learning in robotics, coding, and AI fundamentals, and investing in teacher capacity building, DigiArivu is actively transforming classrooms into innovation-driven learning environments. With five labs already operational and expansion underway in Kanchipuram and Ranipet districts, the initiative is set to impact over 3,000 students. Early outcomes—such as those observed during National Science Week in Arcot—demonstrate a clear shift in student engagement, curiosity, and confidence. This initiative underscores UNGCNI's commitment to long-term, systemic impact, where education, technology, and industry collaboration converge to build skilled, inclusive, and future-ready human capital aligned with India's development and sustainability priorities.



CATALYZE COLLECTIVE ACTION



NDC Implementation & Just Transition – Cement Sector

The NDC Implementation & Just Transition – Cement Sector initiative, led by the United Nations Global Compact Network India in partnership with the Laudes Foundation, is shaping a transformational pathway for decarbonising one of India's most carbon-intensive industries. Moving beyond dialogue, the initiative has convened a powerful coalition of industry leaders, policymakers, financiers, labour representatives, and technical experts to co-create a future that is both low-carbon and socially equitable.



Through a series of high-impact engagements—including a Pre-NDC Virtual Roundtable and a strategic in-person convening in Navi Mumbai—the platform has driven alignment across policy, finance, technology, and just transition frameworks. The result is not just consensus, but momentum: a shared commitment to accelerate decarbonisation while safeguarding livelihoods, reinforcing UNGCNI's role in enabling systemic, sector-wide transformation where climate ambition and inclusive growth go hand in hand.

Regional Industry Engagement Platforms (Chennai & Ahmedabad)

The Regional Industry Engagement Platforms in Chennai and Ahmedabad, convened by the United Nations Global Compact Network India, are emerging as powerful catalysts for translating global sustainability principles into localized business action. Designed as high-trust leadership forums, these engagements brought together industry leaders to move beyond awareness towards peer-driven learning, accountability, and collaborative problem-solving on ESG priorities.

Hosted at Ashok Leyland in Chennai and Adani Green Energy Ltd. in Ahmedabad, the platforms enabled candid exchanges on ESG integration, showcased real-world sustainability journeys, and reinforced the value of aligning with UN Global Compact principles. The outcome has been a clear shift from interest to intent with growing demand for structured partnerships, MoUs, and advisory support—positioning UN GCNI as a trusted enabler of sustained, region-led ESG transformation across India's industrial landscape.



Community-Led Climate Resilience – Seed Banks Initiative (Maharashtra)

At the heart of drought-prone landscapes, a quiet transformation is unfolding—where communities are reclaiming control over their seeds, strengthening resilience, and reviving agricultural heritage. Through this initiative, the United Nations Global Compact Network India is enabling a community-led model of climate resilience and agro-biodiversity conservation, rooted in local knowledge and collective action.

The establishment of two community-managed seed banks in Kasbe Tadawale and Mulewadi has laid the foundation for decentralized seed systems, reducing dependence on external markets. This is complemented by the operationalization of five on-farm conservation centres, preserving 54 indigenous landraces across crops such as sorghum, wheat, and chickpea. Backed by a robust baseline study covering 134 households and participatory engagements with 178 farmers, the initiative has built a strong evidence base while empowering communities to map and protect their own biodiversity.

What makes this effort truly transformative is the scale of engagement—396 farmers actively participating across trainings, demonstrations, exposure visits, and seed bank activities. Over 100 farmers are now cultivating indigenous crop varieties across 51 acres, signalling a shift from preservation to large-scale adoption. With the establishment of 100 Nutri Gardens, the initiative has also strengthened the link between agriculture and nutrition, enhancing household dietary diversity.

Supported by leading institutions such as Vasrantrao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth, Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, and TISS Tuljapur, the programme blends scientific expertise with traditional practices. Farmers are being equipped with improved techniques in seed selection, treatment, storage, and cultivation—while also reviving resilient local varieties such as Dagadi sorghum and Jodgahu wheat.



ADVANCE THE BUSINESS CASE

Ocean Centres India (Jan–March 2026)

Positioning oceans at the heart of sustainable growth, the United Nations Global Compact Network India is advancing a national initiative to unlock the potential of India's blue economy—not just as an environmental priority, but as a strategic frontier for investment, resilience, and inclusive development.

Through a series of consultations across Visakhapatnam, Mangaluru, Goa, and Kolkata, the initiative convened nearly 400 stakeholders spanning government, industry, academia, and civil society, creating a powerful platform for cross-sector alignment. Discussions focused on critical areas such as blue finance, maritime decarbonisation, port infrastructure, skill development, and the livelihoods of coastal communities. In collaboration with key institutions including the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Directorate General of Shipping, Indian Maritime University, and Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, the initiative is shaping a cohesive vision for a sustainable and inclusive ocean economy.

The outcome is clear: a strengthened business and investment case for the blue economy, with emerging pathways for private sector participation, financing, and innovation—reinforcing UN GCNI's role in enabling systemic, future-focused transformation where economic growth and ocean sustainability go hand in hand.

