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Kumi Consulting's Responsible Sourcing Barometer 2026 finds a growing gap between corporate activity and evidence of effective risk reduction as supply chain due diligence requirements continue to increase and grow in complexity.

London, 17 September 2026 09:00 BST – Companies are increasingly identifying significant human rights and environmental risks in their supply chains, but many still lack the evidence needed to determine whether their due diligence efforts are actually reducing those risks.

New findings from the **Kumi Responsible Sourcing Barometer 2026**, an independent industry survey of **110 medium-to-large enterprises across 13 industries**, reveal that while responsible sourcing practices are now firmly embedded within many organisations, companies are focusing on activity rather than effectiveness. The findings come at a time when supply chain due diligence is increasingly subject to complex, changing global regulatory requirements, customer expectations and commercial risk. Organisations are under growing pressure to demonstrate not just that they have policies, processes and governance structures in place, but that these activities are producing meaningful results.

Key findings

- Only **14%** of companies can point to clear improvements resulting from their responsible sourcing activities.
- Less than **one in five (19%)** measure outcomes for workers or the environment.
- A **quarter (25%)** do not measure programme impact at all.
- More than **a third (36%)** of companies identifying forced or child labour among their most serious risks conduct no due diligence beyond their direct suppliers, leaving potential blind spots deeper in their supply chains.
- Nearly **half (46%)** have board-level oversight of responsible sourcing and **77%** assign accountability to a senior executive.
- Supplier capability is identified as the biggest barrier to progress, but only **15%** of companies prioritise building supplier capability.

Companies know the risks that exist in their supply chains. The question is whether their risk management activities are actually working.

Labour and human rights issues dominate companies' stated risk priorities with around half those surveyed stating this as their biggest risk. Yet the research found significant gaps between the recognition of relevant risks and the due diligence practices necessary to take action on these risks.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of participating organisations have mapped only direct suppliers or have not mapped their supply chains at all. Among companies identifying forced or child labour as a priority risk, more than a third conduct (36%) no due diligence beyond Tier 1, direct suppliers.

The findings indicate that organisations may not be directing their resources to the areas where the most significant risks are likely to occur.

Activity is running ahead of evidence

Over the past decade, supplier assessments, audits, certifications, corrective action plans and governance systems have become commonplace, with data on these activities now reaching the

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attention of boards as part of corporate risk management. However, the survey found that few organisations are measuring whether their activities are improving outcomes for workers or the environment or meaningfully reducing harms. Less than one in ten companies (9%) seek feedback from stakeholders such as workers when assessing the effectiveness of their responsible supply chain programmes.

The result is a growing evidence gap. Many organisations can demonstrate what they are doing. Far fewer can demonstrate whether it is working.

Reducing risk or transferring responsibility?

The research also highlights a tension between what companies identify as their biggest challenge and how they respond to it.

Supplier capability emerged as the most frequently cited barrier to progress. However, a third of respondents (32%) said they typically require suppliers to implement corrective actions without providing additional support, while only 15% said building supplier capability was a priority for the year ahead.

The report warns that unless expectations are matched with practical support, there is a danger that corrective action programmes become exercises in transferring responsibility rather than addressing the underlying causes of risk.

Andrew Britton, CEO of Kumi Consulting and one of the principal authors of the report, said:

"The question is no longer whether companies are doing due diligence. The question is whether it is delivering results.

Our research shows that while companies have done a lot to make responsible sourcing part of their core business activities, there are crucial blind spots that many companies are yet to address. There are now serious regulatory compliance and commercial risks related to responsible sourcing, so it is vital that companies can demonstrate that their programmes are not simply producing activity but are meaningfully reducing risks and improving outcomes for people and the environment."

About the Kumi Responsible Sourcing Barometer 2026

The Responsible Sourcing Barometer is a confidential, cross-industry benchmarking survey of responsible sourcing practices from across 110 independent responses from medium to large enterprises operating across 13 industries. The research captures the experiences, priorities and challenges of companies managing supply chain due diligence across a wide range of sectors and geographies. Unlike many studies that rely on public reporting, the Barometer draws on confidential insights from companies about what they are actually doing in practice.

The findings provide valuable insights for boards, sustainability leaders, procurement teams, compliance professionals and investors seeking to understand the current state of responsible sourcing.

About Kumi Consulting

Kumi is an independent management consultancy specialising in responsible business conduct in global supply chains. We help organisations understand and address responsible sourcing, human rights and sustainability challenges, and put commitments into practical action.

Kumi works across the world with organisations in diverse industry sectors including mining and metals, energy, infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, consumer goods and fashion. We combine expertise in risk assessment, management systems and controls, internal governance and capacity building with practical, on the ground experience across global value chains.

For more information visit: www.kumi.consulting

Alongside the core work of Kumi Consulting, we have established Kumi Foundation, an independent UK-registered charity creating pathways from vulnerability to dignified work and sustainable livelihoods in supply chain communities.

For more information visit: www.kumifoundation.org

Report download

[Kumi Responsible Sourcing Barometer 2026](#)

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