

It is time to progress a *Responsible Sand and Silicates Initiative*

Position paper produced from a multistakeholder dialogue at the OECD 2024 Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, May 2024

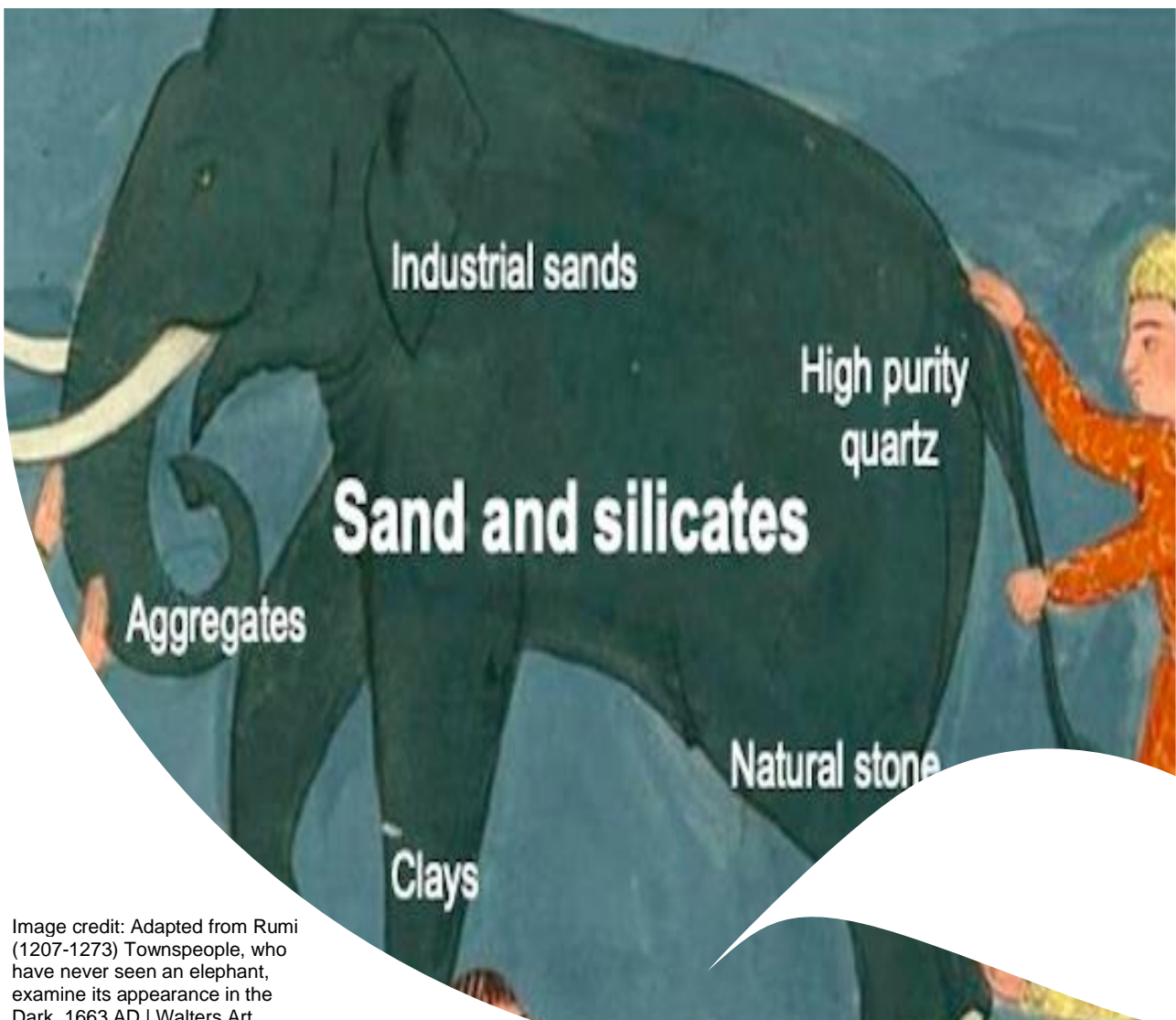


Image credit: Adapted from Rumi (1207-1273) Townspeople, who have never seen an elephant, examine its appearance in the Dark, 1663 AD | Walters Art Gallery/Wikimedia Commons

Background

To date, the University of Queensland, with the support of Inter IKEA and Roca Group, has:

- a. Prepared a scoping study and held a partner led session introducing the issue of responsible sand and silicates at the 2023 OECD Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, supported by Inter Ikea.
- b. Prepared an interim baseline study of social and environmental risks in sand and silicate supply chains supported by the OECD, organised by the OECD 'Annex II' and Environmental Handbook risk categories. The baseline report will be finalised in July 2024 and likely launched in early 2025.
- c. Held six dialogue meetings with – in addition to the organisations mentioned above – Cary Group, Holcim, Intel, Mercedes Benz, Ria Stone, and WWF. The dialogue meetings have provided opportunities to exchange learnings between the participants, and supported the development of the baseline study.
- d. Held three sessions at the 17th OECD Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains addressing the topic.

This exercise is:

- a. Providing evidence of the importance of sand and silicates to the global economy.
- b. Creating a starting point for developing a common language around responsible sourcing of sand and silicates.
- c. Providing a high-level mapping of sand and silicate forms of extraction and supply chains.
- d. Evidencing the existence of all environmental handbook risks and most Annex II risks in sand and silicate supply chains.

However, questions remain:

- a. The prevalence of specific risks across various supply chains and geographies is unknown.
- b. Specific sand and silicate supply chain 'maps' are also unknown.
- c. Appropriate methods for conducting due diligence in sand and silicate supply chains have not been tested.

Proposition

Core assertion: It is time to progress a *Responsible Sand and Silicates Initiative*.

Overall, global knowledge about sand and silicate extraction and supply chains remain limited. Nascent actions from companies – although laudable – may be fragmented. Social and environmental risks in sand and silicate extraction remain, are likely widespread, and may implicate companies across the globe; both those operating locally and transnationally.

Therefore, UQ and the dialogue participants believe a Responsible Sand and Silicate Initiative is a logical next step to collaboratively advance responsibility and sustainability in sand and silicate extraction and supply chains. The initiative could address the following action areas:

a. **Supply chain mapping**

The baseline report will provide high-level knowledge about sand and silicate supply chains. However, it would be sensible to build on this to develop more in-depth descriptions of typical sand and silicate supply chains by industry or geography and with an understanding of typical risks at each step. This would also assist in understanding the degree of interconnectedness of supply chains, and identification of major players who are involved.

b. **Develop a path to certification or labelling, starting first with what exists**

There is an appetite among dialogue group members to be able to demonstrate their adherence to good practice sand and silicate sourcing. However, there are many potential industry programs, standards or certifications addressing sand and silicates. For example, the building materials sector has known certification systems with some applications in sand used for concrete, asphalts, etc. For applications other than construction materials, further and more detailed research will be needed given the breadth of sectors, uses and products involved. In both cases, a full mapping and assessment of suitability for sand and silicates with the intent of arriving at a shared understanding of the way forward with regard to standards, labels or certifications will be an important step.

c. **Co-develop an implementation roadmap for sand and silicates-dependent industries**

According to the OECD Due Diligence Guidance, companies are responsible for conducting due diligence on their supply chains. However, the methods commonly used for the so-called 3TGs, gold or cobalt, may not be fully appropriate for sand and silicates (e.g. the existence of 'pinch points' in sand and silicate supply chains is questionable). Operationalisation support will be needed for developing dedicated approaches adapted to the structure of sand and silicates supply chains, in line with expectations of the 5-step framework of the Due Diligence Guidance.

d. **Collaborative action to address social and environmental risks and impacts**

Actively addressing the human and environmental cost of sand and silicate extractions should be a core value and action area of the initiative.

Organisational form and governance

The precise organisational form and structure of the initiative is being discussed. Emerging core principles are:

- a. **Purpose focus, supported with flexible and adaptive structures.** The purpose is to bring actionable insights that can support risk and impact identification and opportunities for positive impact in sand and silicates sourcing. Negotiation, experimentation and iteration will all be necessary to find ways to achieve shared goals in ways flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and stakeholder needs.
- b. **A multi-stakeholder and participatory approach,** should involving actors from across the supply chain, include civil society, and representation from the Global South.
- c. **Efficient and non-extractive.** Designed to be cost-effective and efficient, in that it does not generate unnecessary data or consume unnecessary time and resources. We acknowledge that organizations often face significant time constraints
- d. **Collaborative governance and leadership.** Forms of governance are needed that encourage participation, empowers stakeholders, and facilitates collaboration in decision making.
- e. **Mutual respect and trust,** acknowledging power imbalances and dynamics to ensure that all stakeholders feel respected and valued.

Invitation

We invite stakeholders to get involved by:

1. Providing feedback on the proposed *action areas* for the initiative
2. Providing input to preferred *organisational forms*, including considering means of financing such as memberships, grants etc.
3. Discussing with UQ a *scale* of activities and organisational *commitment* that is reasonable and commensurate with likely *contributions*.
4. Candidly sharing respective *organisational needs* in respect to sand and silicates.
5. Contributing financially to and participating in the initiative.

Contact information

Louise Gallagher louise.gallagher@uq.edu.au

Daniel Holm d.holm@business.uq.edu.au

Daniel Franks d.franks@uq.edu.au

Global Centre for Mineral Security

Sustainable Minerals Institute

The University of Queensland

