This User Manual provides practical guidance for using the Sand Tool platform, including assessment creation, question workflow by priority, and interpretation of results. It is intended for public authorities, technical agencies, and stakeholders involved in sand resource governance and planning. The manual focuses on operational use of the tool and does not replace national legal or regulatory requirements.

SAND ASSESSMENT TOOL

User Manual

Version 1.0

13/06/2026

1. Introduction

The Sand Assessment Tool provides a structured framework to help stakeholders evaluate how sand resources and related environmental and social impacts are managed in a specific region. It helps users identify strengths, weaknesses, and risks in sand resource governance and management. It supports decision-making across local, regional, and national scales by connecting practical assessment questions with recommended actions from UNEP's 2022 and 2026 sand and sustainability reports.

Global demand for sand is rising, while ecosystems and communities are increasingly affected by extraction. This tool acknowledges the potential tensions between development needs and biodiversity protection, including impacts on ecosystems, livelihoods, and the built environment (for example, erosion and land degradation). It supports users in identifying priorities and what actions to take.

The tool is not a scoring or ranking system. It is a reflective instrument designed to:

- Identify knowledge gaps and governance gaps.
- Assess current practices and impacts related to sand extraction and use.
- Improve coordination across institutions.
- Highlight opportunities to improve sustainable, integrated resource and environmental management.

Importantly, it is not a scoring or benchmarking tool. Instead, it supports long-term planning, dialogue, and better decision-making among public- and private-sector actors.

Overview Sand Assessment Tool

The assessment is structured around four connected components:

- **Resource:** demand, availability, origins, uses, alternatives, and recycled materials.
- **Biodiversity**: ecosystem safeguards, impact monitoring, and mitigation quality.
- **Governance:** legal framework, institutions, enforcement, mandates, transparency, and coordination.
- **Planning and Forecasting:** demand forecasting, spatial planning, and long-term decision support.

Governance, Planning and Forecasting act as bridging components between Resource and Biodiversity. Together, they help ensure that extraction decisions respect ecological limits, legal requirements, and social needs.

1.1 Intended Users

Sand is a cross-cutting issue that involves a wide range of stakeholders across the public and private sector The tool is designed with following stakeholders in mind:

- Governments/ Public Authorities.
- Civil Society/ Academia.
- International Entities
- Extractive Industry & Sand Producers
- End users.
- Infrastructure, Procurement & Finance.

The tool can be used at local, regional, or national scales. Some questions may align more strongly with a specific level, but all users should interpret results in relation to relevant higher-level policies and frameworks.

1.1 Getting Started

Access and Privacy

- The platform is web-based and accessed via a unique URL.
- The URL is editable: anyone with the link can change responses.

- Do not share assessment links in public channels.
- Optional profile information will not be shared with external partners but can be used internally in aggregated form for scientific purposes.
- Avoid entering personal sensitive data.

Create Profile and start Assessment

At the Start page:

1. Enter Assessment name (required).
2. Complete profile details (optional).
3. Select Create assessment.

1.2 How the Assessment Works

Questions are presented in a sequenced workflow:

1. Priority 1
2. Priority 2
3. Priority 3
4. Priority 4
5. Result

Progress counters indicate completion status by priority. Some questions are conditional and appear only when relevant previous answers have been responded positively. All your responses are saved on a continuous basis.

Recommended Working Method

For best results, use an interdisciplinary team (planning, environment, industry, statistics, civil society).

Use a two-pass approach:

1. First pass (about 30 minutes): complete quickly to identify knowns, unknowns, and contested areas.
2. Second pass: investigate gaps, consult institutions, align evidence, and refine responses.

Answer based on current implementation, not planned or aspirational measures.

1.3 Results and output

Results Section

The Result page provides:

- An exportable overview of questions and responses.
- The recommended actions of the UNEP 2022 and 2026 Sand & Sustainability reports.
- A graphical pie chart presenting the proportion of “yes” responses to the questions, highlighting the overall strength of sand management practices; the larger the share, the better the performance.
- Provides a link to the 2022 and 2026 Sand & Sustainability reports.

What Results Mean

Results should be used as a decision-support baseline, not as a final judgment. They help teams prioritize:

- Data collection needs.
- Institutional coordination improvements.
- Policy and enforcement adjustments.

- Mitigation and restoration priorities.

Next Steps After Assessment

If weaknesses are identified, users should:

- Review corresponding recommended actions question by question.
- Assign responsible institutions and timelines.
- Strengthen monitoring and management systems.
- Use findings to guide strategic planning and inter-agency collaboration.
- Mobilize resources for targeted interventions.

The assessment is a starting point for learning, dialogue, and action.

1.6. Key Actor Groups for Closing Gaps To address identified gaps, engage actors in three clusters:

Data and Evidence

- Geological agencies.
- Environmental ministries and agencies.
- Research institutions and universities.
- National statistics offices.
- Finance ministries and public procurement authorities.

Governance and Regulation

- Mining and extraction authorities.
- Urban planning and infrastructure ministries.
- Construction regulators and standards bodies.
- Marine and fishery agencies.
- Environmental permitting and compliance agencies.

Civil Society and Market Actors

- NGOs and community organizations.
- Industry and trade associations.
- Intergovernmental organizations supporting standards and cooperation.

1.7 Technical or Content Support

For technical or content support, contact the Sand Tool coordination team:

Sand@unepgrid.ch