

Building our country one stone at a time

The Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (ASPASA) is a voluntary producers association that helps to improve the quality of aggregates produced by its member companies for construction projects around the country.

The role that Aspasa plays is critical considering that almost every structure made by man relies on aggregates for strength and stability. In fact, construction aggregates are the primary ingredients of all concrete structures and foundations (80% of concrete is aggregate), as well as being the single most important ingredient used to build our roads (94% of a road is aggregate).

"Aggregates and sands used in construction projects are naturally occurring minerals that are mined by a specialised sector of the mining industry in South Africa mainly from quarries. Government strictly regulates sand and aggregate quarries due to the importance of obtaining a reliable supply of quality materials. It also aims to ensure that the minerals and materials are removed in a manner that is sustainable and protects the rights of workers, as well as the environment and surrounding communities.

Responsible association

"As a private sector association representing producers in the industry, we uphold these aims. In addition we strive to create an economically viable industry with good interaction between all parties involved, from the industry, as well as the relevant government departments and other stake holders.

"Our focus remains largely on creating an environment that is fair and equitable, gives our members space to manoeuvre and to make a good living. On the other hand we expect members to comply with all relevant legislation, as well as uphold the strictest standards in quality, health, safety and environmental issues. Annual audits are in place to assist members to achieve set requirements and also to ensure

that they comply with the relevant legislation "We also encourage skills development and nurturing of expertise through our close working relationship with the country's training authorities, as well as hosting regular workshops and seminars," Nico says.

Working together

He explains that quarries represented by Aspasa work closely with the Government and the Chamber of Mines and are able to give input on a wide spectrum of legislation that affects the industry, including input on critical issues surrounding the environment, as well as health and safety matters.

These important issues are represented through expert committees with senior and knowledgeable specialists serving to give informed input on all matters. Through these committees programs are may also be developed to assist the industry to meet development objectives and improve the overall standards on member mines.

A specialist technical committee also represents the industry on matters that can influence the industry. It works with other industry bodies to ensure that specifications for construction work are up to standard and cost effective. Other work carried out by the association includes assistance with human resources, remuneration surveys, workshops on Aids and labour law, employee product assistance (medical aids, pension etc). The association also actively promotes the industry as well as the importance of using Aspasa accredited companies.

Adopting change

"In addition to this Aspasa supports the adoption of a proactive strategy to foster change and to encourage black economic empowerment and

transformation in a sustainable and economically sensible manner. For this reason we subscribes to the aims of the broad-based black-economic empowerment charter for the mining industry. In particular, the pillars of transformation related to:

- Human resources development
- Employment equity
- Encouraging greater community participation and development
- Promoting greater procurement from HDSA companies
- Encouraging greater HDSA ownership and
- Participation and facilitating beneficiation

"These are not only supported, but we believe will contribute to sustainable development in South Africa," Nico concludes.

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The role of quarries

In instances where natural sand and gravel is unavailable, commercial aggregates are created by crushing large stones or by drilling and blasting rock formations and processing them into various sizes of rock and manufactured sand. This process is called "quarrying". Additional processes are required to produce different grades and types of aggregates and sand through drilling and blasting. These crushed stone products can be used for different purposes ranging from creating different grades of concrete, road surfaces or even for drainage purposes and to stabilise land. In the region of 130 quarries are represented by Aspasa.



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