



## The Special Programme for Victims of Apartheid

1985 – 1994

### Overview

The European Commission's *Special Programme for Victims of Apartheid* was founded by the development ministers of (what was then still) the European Community, on initiative of the Parliament, in September 1985. It covered a period between 1986 and 1994, where 450 million Euros (then ECU) in funding was channelled solely through Non-Governmental Organisations to over 700 projects, all of which aimed at supporting the victims of Apartheid and bringing about peaceful transition in South Africa. This made it the biggest overseas development assistance programme to South Africa and one of the EU's largest aid programmes in any country.

This special support programme can be divided into two phases, the first (1985 - 1990) supporting a range of NGOs involved in the areas of education, legal and humanitarian efforts. Starting 1990, after the announcement of political reforms by President F.W de Klerk, the Special Programme widened its scope and also channelled funding to NGOs aiming to facilitate the transition process.

*Manuel Marin, Development Commissioner and Vice-President of the European Commission visiting the Muldersdrift health centre, supported through the Special Programme.*

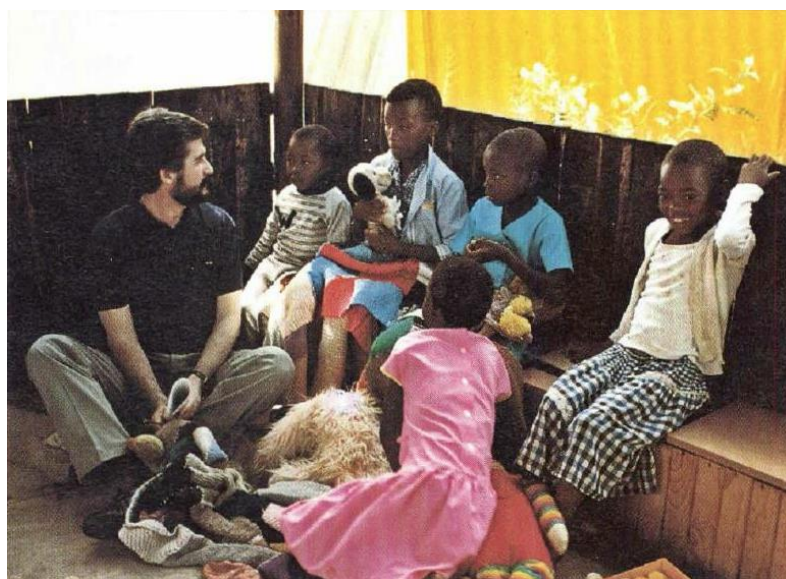


Photo: Dr. Wim A. G. Blomk

### Supporting the victims of Apartheid

The system of Apartheid in South Africa has been opposed by the European Community (EC) since its inception, with the EC implementing opposing measures since the 1970s. When the system of repression intensified in South Africa in the 1980s

and a state of Emergency was called out, the Foreign Ministers of European Community member states agreed on the need for a stronger policy response.

### **Phase 1: 1985 – 1990**

The setup of an approach to counter the inequalities created by Apartheid in South Africa required careful design and was complex in its implementation, since the imposition of complete economic and political sanctions on South Africa would have inevitably resulted in negatively affecting those citizens the sanctions were aiming to benefit. This resulted in deciding on a two-pronged approach for the EU support to the transition of South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s, involving both restrictive and positive

measures. The negative measures were implemented in the form of various sanctions imposed on the previous regime in the form of political, economic and moral pressure. Simultaneously, a positive approach was used through providing support to several hundred programmes implemented by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in South Africa (and some



in Namibia). The supported projects aimed towards alleviating the effects of repression, which is why support was channelled through non-violent organisations. The eligibility criteria for all projects required all activities to "subscribe and promote in some way the concept of non-racialism". The support provided in the first phase of the Special Programme covered three areas, namely education and training; humanitarian and social projects; and legal support.

Through engagement with well-known political leaders and other South African freedom activists, *the Special Programme* was born in 1985.<sup>1</sup> Funding in support of victims of Apartheid in South Africa was channelled exclusively through four implementing arms, which had entered into Framework agreements with the EC:

- The South African Council of Churches (SACC)
- The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC)
- The Kagiso Trust (KT)
- The Trade Unions.

These NGOs were chosen as institutions independent from the state and able to gather considerable support within the communities the Programme intended to serve. Along with the funding provided to the four principal partners for channelling to projects, the Special Programme also included capacity building activities for all involved NGOs to strengthen their organisational management, increase capacity and operate more efficiently. Lastly, the programme funded research in relevant areas through institutions based in

South Africa, providing technical expertise to the work of the grassroots programmes.

### Three core forms of support

1. Funding of activities
2. Technical support (organisational development and capacity building)
3. Technical expertise through research

NGOs within the EC that had gathered experience in working with South African NGOs as well as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) were invaluable in providing their experience and linking networks to propose projects for support by the European Commission.

Key activity areas funded under the core sectors of support in Phase 1 were as follows:

<b>Education &amp; training</b>	Bursary programmes Pre-school education Literacy programmes Non-formal education Specialised training for key needs areas
<b>Humanitarian &amp; social projects</b>	Health Community development Urban & rural development Human rights Democracy promotion Alternative press
<b>Legal assistance</b>	Assistance for politically motivated legal cases Human rights research and campaigning

<sup>1</sup> In addition, a further complementary measure was implemented in 1987, when a special budget was approved to counter the effects of South African destabilisation in the Southern African Development Community.



## Phase 2: 1991 - 1994

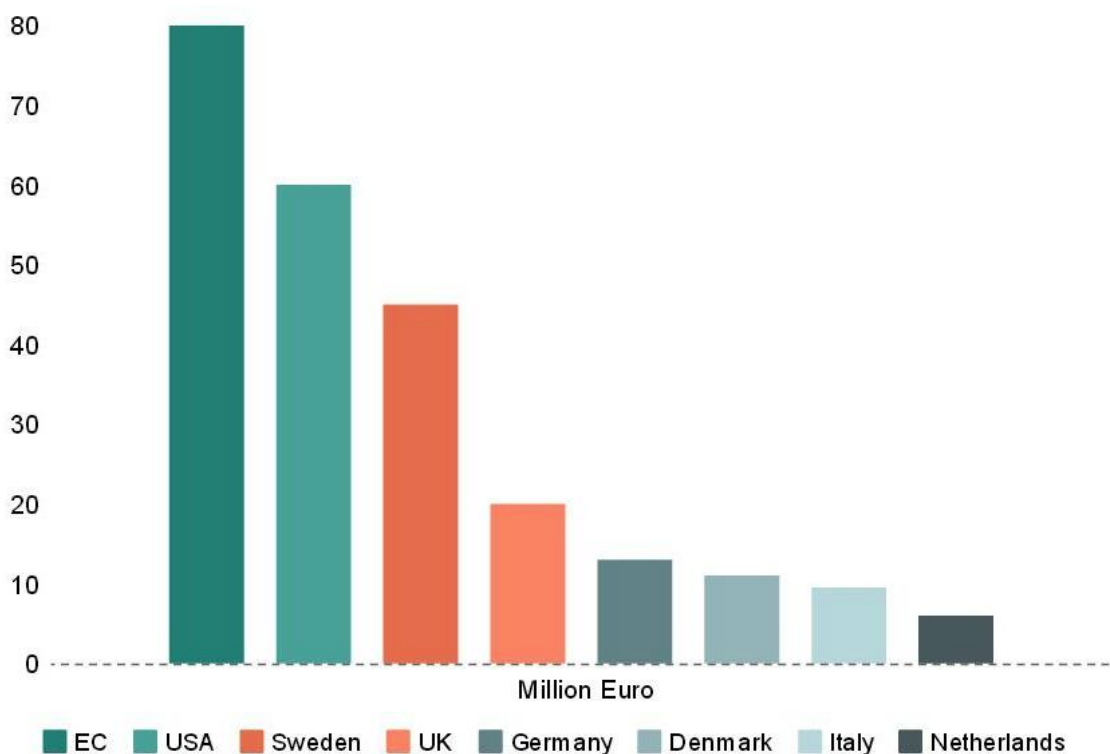
From 1991, the Commission adapted the Special Programme to meet the needs of changing political circumstances in South Africa (Phase 2 of the Programme). The new approach broadened the intervention to involve an integrated and coherent development programme, which made interventions in existing sectors of support more targeted, and also matched the Programme intervention to support the profound transition process that was underway. For example, it focused on development needs of the black population, including training and housing, but also supporting the repatriation of refugees and the approximately 40,000 exiled persons to South Africa.

The second phase saw an incremental increase in

yearly disbursements to South Africa. Alone 10 Million Euros were provided to support the election which took place in April of 1994. Through the EU, the transition process benefited from support to the new legal framework of South Africa, election observers, voter education activities and the financing of the electoral campaigns of all registered parties to support the establishment of a legitimately elected Government.

The Commission felt that this new approach also required changes in the institutional setup of the support to South Africa's transition to democracy and further development. Following a consultative process between the Commission and the four South African partner organisations, a decision was taken to end the exclusive role of the SACC,

External assistance to South Africa, 1992



Source: Salih Booker, UNDP, 1992



SACBC, KT and trade unions in the identification of projects.

Subsequently, in February 1991, the European Commission opened a Programme Coordination Office in Pretoria, which enabled a more hands-on and diversified partnership approach and also ensured that the interventions remained relevant to the individual country context.

It continued to make use of the three core forms of support named above, though policy research was expanded from including only local institutions to international experts and institutions as well.



Photo: Eric Miller

*The EU support included urban sector service delivery projects, specifically in the areas of water and sanitation, refuse removal and housing.*

## **Achievements**

Given the exceptional circumstances of the South African context and the implementation of the special programme, paired with limited technical resources available to follow up on the execution of the more than 700 projects, a precise quantitative judgement on the degree of success achieved by the projects is challenging.

However, in terms of qualitative judgement, Nelson Mandela in January 1994 made the statement as President of the African National Congress that "...[w]ithout the Special Programme it would not have been possible to have the basis for a democratic South Africa".

The second phase of the Special Programme committed to five core areas of support:

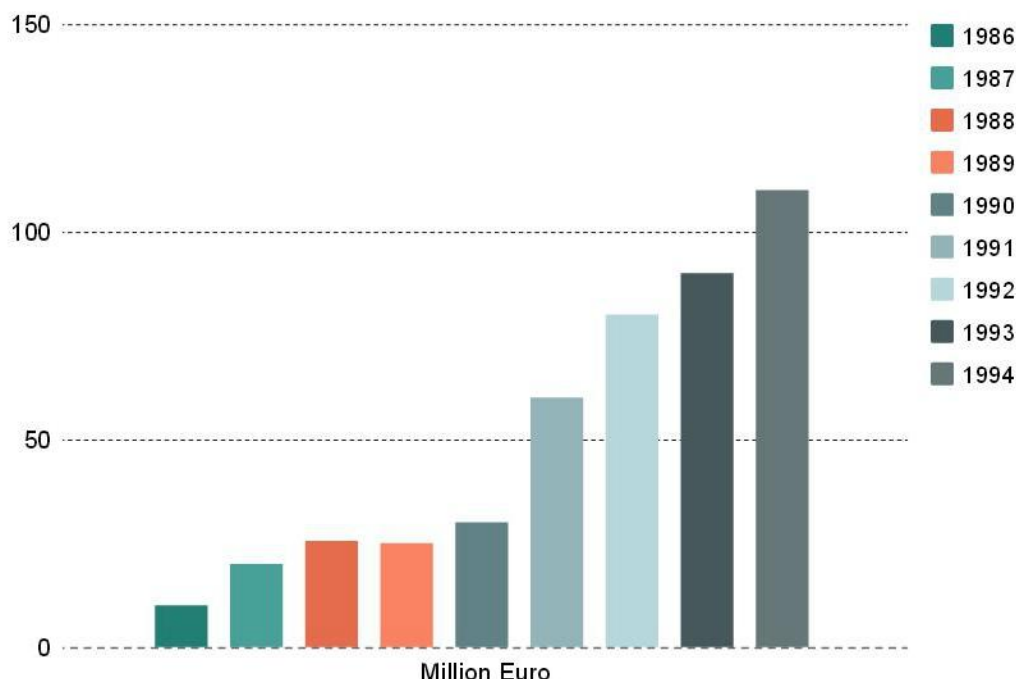
- Education and training (the largest areas of support, not least because the programme had a view of training the future civil servants of a democratic South Africa);
- Health;
- Rural and agricultural development (also covering water and sanitation issues);
- Community development (including local government transformation); and
- Good governance and democratisation.

The experiences gathered through the Special Programme and the approach of linking up with grassroots organisations have proved instrumental in determining the partnership with South Africa going forward, but also in designing EU development assistance globally. It was a ground-breaking initiative in terms of defining development through a bottom-up approach, rather





## Annual disbursements under the Special Programme



than top-down, which has encouraged this approach world-wide.

The historic partnership with various NGOs has also strengthened these institutions and contributed towards their sustainability. The Kagiso Trust [Kagiso meaning Peace] serves as an example. Today, the Trust is recognised as one of the leading development agencies in the country. It was founded when the Special Programme of the EU was set up in 1985 and the need for a secular organisation to complement and widen the reach of the work undertaken by churches and trade unions in opposing apartheid in South Africa was identified.

The EU support of 1,2 billion Rands in the early stages of its formation (1985-1997) has contributed to the Trust firmly establishing itself as an important player in the areas of education and enterprise development in South Africa<sup>2</sup>.

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Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace

<sup>2</sup> The funding the Trust received from the European Union has been used towards the support of 1 800 projects.