

It is highly unlikely that any of these NGOs—which constitute by far the majority of organizations outside of government, political parties or trade unions—would be prepared to express any independent views on the issue of development assistance and military spending.

Anti-apartheid NGOs

In South Africa, however, there is a distinct NGO tradition arising from the struggle against apartheid. During the era when the liberation movement was banned, NGOs became the principal way in which communities and interest groups opposed to apartheid organized themselves. In alliance with some churches and the trade unions, they became a powerful anti-government force.

The advent of democracy has left many of these politically oriented NGOs adrift: some have had difficulty in deciding whether they are in opposition to or an adjunct of government, many have seen their constituencies eroded and most have faced funding crises as donors have redirected resources towards the new government. They also have had to deal with a haemorrhage of leadership as many senior officials have left to join government at the local, provincial or national levels.

Many NGOs, particularly those of an overtly political nature, have folded. Of those in the anti-apartheid tradition which remain, the majority are development oriented and/or community based (usually referred to as Community Based Organizations—CBOs).

While the author could find no evidence that any of these NGOs or CBOs have expressed views on the topic under discussion, most would broadly be in favour of the South African state reallocating resources from defence to development (particularly the Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP]). This view is confirmed by one of the main NGO-funding co-ordinating agencies, Interfund.³

Given the democratic and consultative way in which most of these NGOs work, a long process would be entailed in bringing them to reach a consensus statement on the issue of

³Interview with Gerald Kraak, Interfund.