

PERCEPTIONS OF THE THIRD WORLD AMONG NORWEGIAN WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

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Norway generally has a positive image in the Third World as measured by its United Nations voting record and official aid performance. An important element in Norwegian relationships with the external world is its Non-Governmental Organisations. Further, women have become important as key 'targets' in resource transfers from Norway. This study examines and analyses the perceptions held on the Third World by the key personnel in the major women's organisations in Norway.

Eight leading women's organisations which have undertaken women's projects in the Third World and five new feminist organisations were selected for the study and their key members were subjected to extensive interviews both through a structured questionnaire and unstructured interviews.

The results indicate that key members of the first category do not necessarily match the positive external image of Norway's relations with the Third World. Many areas of ignorance and prejudice of the Third World were revealed in addition to broad positive aspects. Their members were largely in an older age bracket, motivated by charity and 'Christian' orientations without seeing the structural causes for underdevelopment in the Third World. The new feminist organisations consisted of a younger group of women more aware of the structural causes for under-development. They also brought a less paternalistic attitude towards relationships with the Third World.

The study also contrasts these results with those of a study by the author on Sri Lankan Women's Organisations.