

1.8 How do children begin work in the carpet industry?

In the Indian context, three means of entry are recognized:

1. Approximately 40% to 50% of children are from the poorer regions of the country whose parents have given them to moneylenders in the bonded labour arrangement described above (1.3c).
2. Another significant group are family members of loom owners, who work for their parents. In some cases, this may be part-time work that does not interfere with their development, or it may be exploitative.
3. A small proportion are children from the locality whose families believe it is good for them to learn a trade. Some of these children grow up in the care of adults who are already engaged in carpet production. They begin with simple chores and eventually take up work at the looms themselves.

In Nepal, some similarities to India exist in that children also migrate to the carpet industry from the poorest regions. However, there is some evidence that the conditions of work are less difficult, and that child workers in Nepal are more likely to leave this work than their Indian counterparts. In any case, the number involved is relatively small (approximately 3,000), compared to the 100,000 - 150,000 estimated to have been working in the industry in Nepal in the early 1990s.

OBJECTIVE 2

AN OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF RUGMARK, ITS ASSUMPTIONS, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION SYSTEMS, AND CONDITIONS NEEDED TO MAKE IT WORK

2.1 What are the assumptions underlying RUGMARK both as an anti-child labour activity and as a labelling scheme?

The main assumptions underlying RUGMARK are the following:

1. That enough Indian (and now Nepalese) carpet exporters can be persuaded to participate in the scheme to consistently offer labelled carpets to the Western consumer.
2. That a label, in concert with a public education campaign, will induce consumers to buy a particular carpet.
3. That the labelled carpet is, in fact, made without child labour.
4. That children, once protected from work on the looms are actually better off, and have not simply moved into some equally hazardous form of employment.