

2.14 How does RUGMARK combat exploitative child labour in the carpet industry?

This is discussed under section 2.6 above: 'How is child free labour guaranteed?'

2.15 How is labelling perceived by developing countries?

Developing countries no more contain a unified view on labelling than do developed countries like Canada. Furthermore, perceptions vary between different interests in society. In the case of RUGMARK, accusations of protectionism and cultural imperialism have been made by some in India. However, advocacy around the issue of child labour in carpet production began with elements of Indian civil society, and was later brought to the attention of NGOs in Germany. RUGMARK has been able to quickly rebut suggestions of protectionism because it has the voluntary compliance of Indian producers, and cannot be categorized as a trade barrier.

2.16 Is labelling a reasonable intervention when child labour is the issue?

The solution to the problem of child labour, especially the most exploitative forms, goes well beyond labelling of products in the export trade. Both the number of children involved and the variety of industries using child labour are such that export-oriented labelling can only affect a very limited number of exploited children (see 1.6 above). However, labelling may not be unreasonable if it is introduced in concert with other initiatives designed to directly address the problem of child labour - improved law enforcement, compulsory primary education, provision of rural credit, and poverty alleviation are some of the key areas.

2.17 What are the strengths of RUGMARK?

- As a voluntary system linking exporters and importers, it has credibility, and cannot be met with charges of protectionism from countries which employ child labour.
- Its system of contributions from both exporters and importers has the potential eventually to sustain the regulatory system on both ends without external support.
- It appears to have the support of a range of parties concerned about child labour, including both Western labour rights activists and Asian NGOs.
- It is already established in the world's largest hand-knotted carpet market - Germany.
- It has the potential to generate interest in, and consequently resources towards, the broader causes of child labour in developing countries.