

industry, provided they can be educated to demand child labour-free carpets and provided that production can actually be subjected to scrutiny.

1.6 In what ways does it not make sense to focus on carpets?

A carpet-focused consumer campaign could only achieve a small impact on the overall problem of child labour. Figures from India suggest that the great preponderance of child labour takes place outside the carpet industry - even outside of the export sector as a whole. Furthermore, within this small area of child labour, Canada represents a minor market. From a purely child labour standpoint, it would make more sense to focus on a sector like agriculture, which employs far more children.

Child labour in the export sector is thought to represent only 4% - 7% of all child labour globally. Estimates of the extent of child labour in the Indian carpet industry vary. Indian NGOs engaged in the campaign against the practice typically quote estimates of 300,000 to 400,000 children nationally. The Indian government uses the unrealistic figure of 7,000. The UNICEF office in India estimates that the number lies somewhere between 70,000 and 100,000. The total number of children working in India is also in dispute. A 1986 Ministry of Labour study put the figure at 16.6 million, but estimates based on the number of children not attending school are as high as 80 - 90 million. However, even using the lower figure, children in the carpet industry would represent less than one percent of child labour nationally. The majority of child labourers in India (85%) are thought to be engaged in agriculture.

If the carpet industry constitutes a very small portion of child labour in India, the percentage of its output which is exported to Canada is also small relatively small. Export figures from India lump together a range of floor coverings besides hand-knotted carpets; however, the aggregate figures for 1994/5 put exports to Canada at approximately 3.5% of total exports (compared to 44% to Germany and 34% to the United States).

1.7 What are the characteristics of hand-knotted carpet production which might make it less than susceptible to this type of control mechanism in terms of accessibility?

While carpet production in Nepal tends to be concentrated in the capital, and carried out in small factories, the nature of production in India is that of a cottage industry, which would make it a challenge to control. Carpet exporters in India rely on a system of contractors who farm out work to loom owners. The production sites typically consist of single looms or small groups of looms, sometimes in homes, and often in remote villages. Although the Indian government has

outlawed the use of child labour in carpet production, weaving within family-based operations is permitted. It may be difficult to distinguish genuine family-centred production from small commercial looms which operate with bonded child labour. This difficulty, combined with inaccessibility of looms in more remote areas, makes control of hand-knotted carpet production difficult.