

OBJECTIVE 1

THE CONTEXT FOR RUGMARK: CHILD LABOUR IN CARPET INDUSTRY

1.1 What countries produce carpets?

Many countries produce carpets. However the countries known to produce hand-knotted carpets, the source of concern over child labour, include:

Afghanistan	Nepal
China	Pakistan
India	Tunisia
Iran	Turkey
Morocco	Ex-USSR

1.2 Which countries are known to have child labour components in the manufacture of carpets?

India, Nepal, and Pakistan are most frequently cited as the major users of child labour in carpet production. However, campaigns in Europe and a recent drop in the European market appear to have already forced a change in the carpet industry in Nepal; some labour reform activists believe children are no longer a significant part of the carpet producing labour force there.

Canadian carpet importers consulted suspect that child labour is used to some extent in hand-knotted carpet production in all countries, although the number of children involved in countries other than the three cited above may be small.

India's carpet industry is the most thoroughly documented with respect to the presence of child labour. After Iran, it also has the largest share of the world market (14.5%). Because it is difficult to generalize about the carpet industry, which is structured differently from country to country, the discussion below refers mainly to India, the only country where RUGMARK is fully operational.

1.3 Describe the child labour component of the carpet industry.

a) What is done?

Carpet production involves a range of activities, including spinning, weaving, washing, stretching, and finishing. Most concern about child labour centres on the weaving stage. Weavers follow a design pattern provided to the loom owners by contractors (who act as intermediaries between the carpet exporters and the loom owners). Strands of wool are woven-in, knotted, trimmed, and then pounded to achieve the necessary tension. It has been suggested that the 'nimble' fingers of children