

EFFECTIVENESS OF RUGMARK IN ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR

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Preface

In 1992, by conducting a study on child Labour in Carpet Manufacturing Units, CEC contributed to the formulation of the RUGMARK campaign. The present study is part of the ongoing campaign on Social Clause / Labour Rights in Multilateral Trade Agreements. RUGMARK is an exceptional instance where labour rights are being monitored through the instrumentality of trade. At the same time, the monitoring takes place, to a large extent, voluntarily, without the involvement of government and multilateral agencies. This makes it a unique experiment in international co-operation. The study explored this phenomenon and its effectiveness in eradicating child labour at the product's originating country.

Methodology of the study included sample surveys through prepared questionnaires. Field visits were conducted to Carpet weaving centres like Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi in Uttar Pradesh and Garhwa, Palamu and West Champaran districts of Bihar. Interviews were taken from locals, manufacturers and exporters, adult carpet weavers, grass roots activists, CEPC and RUGMARK officials, Officials in the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, NGOs active in the campaign against child labour etc.

The study found that the RUGMARK initiative had been largely effective in eradicating child labour in Mirzapur-Bhadohi-Varanasi carpet belt and the adjoining districts of Allahabad, Sonebhadra, Shahjahanpur, Azamgarh and Jaunpur. Since its formation, spot checks by RUGMARK inspectors in the looms in the above areas found 942 child labourers in 555 looms licensed by RMF. During its two and a half years of operation, RMF had issued licences to 144 exporters operating 17,859 looms, and certified over 4,66,317 carpets. RMF is

running schools and rehabilitation centres for freed children in Jagpur, Bairbisa, Gopiganj and Bhadohi. It has also been found that export companies like Om carpets, Ram International, Khan carpets and Orient carpets have shown upswing in their sale, which confirms the fact that the RUGMARK label has a competitive potential in the importing countries. Nevertheless, it was also found that a sizeable section of the carpet manufacturers in Varanasi, Mirzapur, Allahabad and Sonebhadra are sending their work away to Garhwa, Palamau and West Champaran in the nearby state of Bihar. There they are not to fear the watchful eyes of national and international groups working against child labour.

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J John
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CHAPTER 1

I. CARPET INDUSTRY- A BACKGROUND

Though no clear evidence is available to suggest much about the origin of carpet weaving in India, it is commonly believed that carpet weaving found its way to India from Persia. Some people also hold that carpets were woven in North Indian towns of Lahore, Amritsar and Agra even as early as mid-sixteenth century when the Mughal Emperor Akbar ruled the country. People believe that Sher Shah Suri's royal cavalcade was moving eastward when few weavers from the *Manthar* tribe chose to settle down at Ghosia on the Grand Trunk Road. Weaving was taught to the local inhabitants by them. The oldest known carpet manufacturer in this region was Shiekh Rahamatullah and Brothers who set up their firm in 1816. The process was promoted on commercial lines by some English concerns like A. Tallery & Sons ,Obeetee Carpets and E,A. Hill & Co. who set up their units in 1890. These companies still continue to be manufacturers even though the management changed hands several times. (Since then inhuman practice of employing children for carpet weaving is in existence.)

CARPET WEAVING AREAS:

The carpet weaving centres are largely located in Uttar Pradesh, a land locked

state. Carpet weaving started around the districts of Mirzapur and Bhadohi. It is here that about 80-90 per cent of the hand-knotted carpets of export quality are produced. Gradually, the carpet belt spread over other districts of Eastern UP in the order mentioned: Varanasi, Sonebhadra, Allahabad, Gazipur, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Gorakhpur, Rai Bareilly, Bareilly and Faizabad. In Western UP, Agra has some carpet weaving units. Outside UP, weaving is done on a smaller scale in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Gujarat.

Large concentration of carpet weaving units are in the Aurai, Digh, Suriyawan, Gopiganj and Khamaria blocks of Bhadohi district. In Mirzapur district the areas of intense convergence are, Chanbe, Kon, Majhwa and Mirzapur Nagar. Lalganj and Halia blocks of the district are newer areas of growth. During the last five to six years carpet weaving has also started in Robertsganj, Dudhi and Wyndomganj of Sonebhadra district, Shahjahanpur in Barielly, Beerapur and Handia in Allahabad. When adjoining area of the South Bihar districts of Palamau and Garhwa extending upto Champaran and Purnea in the North-East Bihar have also been incorporated in the carpet weaving zones. The major thrust of expansion of carpet units in these areas has been towards the relatively more backward Vindhya-Kaimur plateau region extending upto Sindhri- Sarguja and Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh, which also forms the main tribal fringe of the middle Ganges plain. It serves as one of the major 'labour catchment' areas for the industry.

Large-scale induction of labour from Nepal has also taken place in the last 15 years as the demand for Tibeto -Nepal type of carpets, the low-priced 'replaceable kind' not rated for its antique value, has come to capture the European market. This new development has also brought in, for the first time, a

significant number of girl child as well as adult weavers from Nepal; and tribal girls and women trained in carpet weaving in the Tibetan-refugee settlements of Sarguja, in Madhya Pradesh.

Carpet industry in this region has generated specific demand patterns for child labour and the supply situation has responded to it. On one hand the density of loomage increased in the Mirzapur-Bhadohi carpet belt and on the other the industry network was expanded by implanting carpet looms in the newer areas, either by directly opening up company branch offices or by appointing agents, weaving contractors and loom leaders. During the last two decades the industry has outgrown the traditional Mirzapur-Bhadohi carpet belt, and created a vast peripheral region. In spite of its economic importance and the intense campaigns undertaken against exploitative use of child labour there is no reliable data pertaining the very basic nature of the industry.

KNOTTING EFFICIENCY DEMONSTRATES THE QUALITY OF A CARPET:

Production of hand-knotted carpets has grown significantly over the last five decades. Today, India is the second largest producer in the field of hand-knotted carpets. Weavers have successfully spread their craft to cover areas where carpet weaving did not exist earlier. The value of carpets are determined by the knots per square inch. The carpet produced in 1950's had only 30, as compared with 200 in those woven today. The woollen threads are now chrome dyed, which provides durable colours and makes them easier to maintain. Design has also improved and there is a wider choice now available than in the past. Hand-knotted pile carpets are woven on the wooden looms. Alongwith the knots per square inch, the quality of a carpet depends on the motifs and the

intricacies of design put exquisitely. Generally, three qualities of woollen yarns are used by the weavers. New Zealand worsted and semi-worsted fibres are of finer quality . For the carpets of more than 90 knots per square inch, extra knots are compressed. The quality of wool depends on the smoothness and constancy in its fibre. In the carpet weaving centres over thirty different knotting qualities are in practice. On the basis of the knots per square inch, which varies from 24 to 410 knots, broadly six different categories have emerged. These are as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1: QUALITY CATEGORIZATION OF CARPETS

| Quality | Knots per square inch |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| COARSE | 24 to 49 |
| LOW | 50 to 88 |
| MEDIUM | 91 to 135 |
| HIGH | 140 to 180 |
| FINE | 186 to 242 |
| EXTRA FINE | 249 to 410 |

Source: Mirzapur-Bhadohi Carpet Manufacturers

VALUE OF CARPET EXPORT:

Carpets having a strong import content has hardly any domestic market except for some export surplus/rejected goods. This makes the carpet industry highly vulnerable to various types of manipulative practices used by the foreign importers.

Carpet manufactured in the Mirzapur-Bhadohi carpet belt is wholly export-oriented. It had attracted the attention of the international buyers during the Great London. Exhibition of 1851 and went through many twists and turmoil since then. The intense crisis looming large over the world during the second world war had made the market uncertain.

Until about 1960's carpet manufacturing was mainly geared to the cheaper market, that is the old Empire circuit: England, Australia and parts of Africa. Between 1963 and 1980 however India overtook the Islamic Republic of Iran to become the foremost carpet exporter in the world. In general, India has been able to provide a cheaper product with new designs and colour combinations. However, considerable efforts have been made by China, Morocco and Pakistan to capture a sizeable portion of the world market in carpets, which clearly indicates that India will be hard-pressed to maintain its lead in the future.

In 1947-48 the total value of carpet-export was Rs.380 million, which increased to Rs.600 million in 1951-52. Due to heavy recession in the market spanning from 1960 to 1972 the value of export of carpets slid down to Rs.100 million. Thereafter it picked up, and in 1974-75 it was Rs.338.6 crores, followed by Rs.848.6 crore, in 1977-78, Rs.1380 crore in 1984-85 and Rs.1822.4 crore in 1994-95.

The Indian carpet industry which exports 80 to 90 per cent of its output controls over 18 percent of the global market and earns approximately US \$600 million. Table 2 shows India's export and percentage of world total carpet export.

TABLE 2:INDIA's CARPET EXPORT (million US\$)

| YEAR | EXPORT | PERCENTAGE OF WORLD TOTAL |
|-------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1965 | 8 | 6 |
| 1970 | 11 | 6 |
| 1980 | 217 | 15 |
| 1990 | 318 | 17 |
| 1995 | 580.84 | 18 |

SOURCE: CEPC

The main importers of the Indian carpets were Germany (\$ 197.82) in 1994-95. India exported 11,901 square metres of woollen carpets in 1994-95 as against 13,293 square metres in the previous year. While the share of wool-woven carpets increased from 19 to 22 percent, wool-knotted carpets declined from 67 to 62 percent.

Various types of production relations are inexistence in the carpet industry. There is confusion regarding the distinction between manufacturers and exporters on one hand and the loom workers and contractors, on the other. In many cases some of them plays double or even tripple roles.

STATEMENT OF EXPORTS DURING 1991-92,1992-93 & 1994-95 OF HANDMADE WOOLEN CARPETS , RUGS , DURRIES AND NAMDHAS OF SILK, WOOLEN AND SYNTHETIC CARPETS

| <i>S.No.</i> | <i>Countries</i> | <i>1992-93</i> | | <i>1993-94</i> | | <i>1994-95</i> | |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | | <i>Rs. Crores</i> | <i>US\$ million</i> | <i>Rs. Crores</i> | <i>US\$ million</i> | <i>Rs. Crores</i> | <i>US\$ million</i> |
| 1 | Australia | 14.25 | 4.99 | 19.94 | 6.3 | 21.16 | 8.32 |
| 2 | Canada | 27.45 | 9.63 | 49.44 | 15.70 | 64.85 | 20.66 |
| 3 | France | 17.71 | 6.20 | 24.82 | 7.88 | 32.53 | 10.36 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|--------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 4 | Germany | 385.12 | 134.89 | 539.71 | 171.34 | 707.60 | 255.52 |
| 5 | Italy | 30.35 | 10.63 | 40.53 | 12.87 | 53.13 | 16.93 |
| 6 | Japan | 27.95 | 9.79 | 41.15 | 13.07 | 54.26 | 17.30 |
| 7 | Netherlands | 24.49 | 8.58 | 32.32 | 10.26 | 42.36 | 13.50 |
| 8 | Saudi Arabia | 3.38 | 1.18 | 4.74 | 1.50 | 6.21 | 1.98 |
| 9 | Switzerland | 47.85 | 16.76 | 52.05 | 16.54 | 68.25 | 21.74 |
| 10 | USA | 332.09 | 116.32 | 473.34 | 150.28 | 620.57 | 197.82 |
| 11 | UK | 32.16 | 11.26 | 35.02 | 11.13 | 42.01 | 13.38 |
| 12 | Others | 49.20 | 17.23 | 76.94 | 26.28 | 104.57 | 33.33 |
| | Total | 992.00 | 347.46 | 1390.00 | 443.18 | 1822.40 | 580.84 |
| 1 | Woolen Carpets / Dhurries | 842.85 | 295.22 | 1196.85 | 381.60 | 1591.86 | 501.36 |
| 2 | Silk Carpets | 69.15 | 24.22 | 88.90 | 28.34 | 107.60 | 34.24 |
| 3 | Synthetic Carpets | 80.00 | 28.02 | 104.25 | 33.24 | 122.95 | 39.19 |

Source: CEPC

PROCESS INVOLVED IN MANUFACTURING OF CARPETS:

In a number of cases the manufacturer/exporter deals directly with the loom owners through his own employees spread out all over the carpet weaving areas anywhere in the country. In this system there is some contact between the loom owner and the manufacturer. His staff makes periodical visits to the loom owner's establishment but because of the huge area involved these visits, for practical reasons, cannot be more than once or twice in a month. This system is applicable only to about 20% of the total carpet production.

The second system is where the manufacturer/exporter gives his raw material, design and order specifications to a completely independent entrepreneur\ contractor who finds loom owners (in number normally ranging from 5 to 100) and receives the woven unfinished carpets which he thereafter gives to

manufacturer/exporter either in finished or unfinished condition. For this he receives an amount as commission. In this system the manufacturer/exporter does

not have any idea as to where carpets against his orders are being woven. His only contact is the small entrepreneur who has arranged the weaving of carpets. In the third system manufacturer/exporter gives to the small entrepreneur only the design and colours for the carpets to be made against his order specifications. The entrepreneur then purchases the raw materials, arranges its dyeing and gets the carpet woven. These carpets are then sold to the manufacturer/exporter either in finished or unfinished forms.

In yet another system, the individual loom owners, or the small entrepreneur/contractors themselves manufacture their own carpets and sell them to the Trader/exporter.

In none of these systems there is any contact between the exporter and the real manufacturer-the loom owner. On this basis the manufacturers\exporters claim that they are not the employers of the weavers and there is no question of employing or exploiting child labour. Further they state that if at all such a thing exists, the onus lies with the loom owners/master weavers and not with the exporters.

It would be fallacious and misleading to project the carpet industry as a simple decentralized cottage industry. There can be no denying the fact that in strict legal terms the exporter is the 'principal employer' of the weavers and other allied workers employed on his behalf by loom-owners. But certain facts are underplayed or concealed in this simplified version of production relation. First

of all the small entrepreneurs/contractors (commission agents) constitute a separate category; secondly, there is quite a long line of intermediaries between the loom holder and the exporter; thirdly, in recent years a class of elite loom-holders has emerged as a special and sizeable category. Thus the image of the industry as a pattern of self-employed weavers working as a family unit contains a great deal of idealisation.

Far from being an industry of self-employed weavers, the ownership of looms are getting more and more concentrated in the hands of the non-artisan class. The looms are placed together in factory-like 'sheds' or in domestic premises, or even in the cottages of the weavers in a dispersed manner. But the fact remains that the emergence of this non-artisan owner class is, in reality, a major contributory factor in the aggravation of the problem of child labour; more so in case of the migrant-captive type of labour drafted from outside the village or locality.

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CHAPTER 2

II. CHILD LABOUR IN THE CARPET INDUSTRY- AN OVERVIEW

In the Varanasi-Mirzapur-Bhadohi carpet belt the looms are run in the cluster of thatched huts. It is no different from the other clusters along the roads passing through the carpet zone. Once inside the hut, however we discover the felony. Each cluster is, in fact, a full-fledged industrial shed with 5 to 6- odd looms jutting out of rows of long ditches made on the earth floor. Behind the looms and within the ditches are hidden the children, ranging in ages from four to fourteen, who sit hunched in rows in dimly lit, decrepit factories, knotting carpets by hand. Anywhere between five lakh and one crore children are forced to work for a good 16 hours a day. Often beaten and underfed, locked in the factory by night, they are deprived of education, sunshine and freedom, having inherited poverty their helpless families. Some of the loom owners have even gone to the extent of branding the children with red hot iron rods, burning them with cigarette butts and hanging them upside down for minor faults at work.

For of the child workers in the carpet looms, the day begins with the first streak of sunlight bringing in the first hint of illumination in the dark confines of the 'factory'. The day begins with a fistful of coarse rice and a watery dal for each

child. It ends around 9 p.m. with a single roti. The loom owners provide only as much as they think is necessary to keep body and soul together for the children. Besides cutting costs and reaping profits out of wages, which would be about 40 percent of the cost if lawful wages were provided, it is a business strategy to squeeze more by giving less for sustenance.

AGENTS' MODUS OPERANDI FOR PICKING UP CHILDREN:

There is a well-organised network of labour' scouts' spread out down to the village level. They have carved out specific' territories' for themselves. Many big manufacturers/loom owners procure child labour on their own by using older boys for liaison. A new feature that seems to be catching up now, is the appearance on the scene of contractors from the labour supply area itself who not only supply but also control the labour. This practice is more prevalent in washing, packing and such other processes of carpet manufacturing.

Agents go deeper into the impoverished villages of Saharsa, Khagaria, Katihar, Rohtas, Madhubani, Madhepura, Sitamarhi, Sasaram, Purnea, Chapra, Rohtas, Darbhanga, Champaran and Gopalganj in North-East Bihar; *Garhwa, Palamau, Rohtas* and Girdih in South Bihar; Santhal Parganas in East Bihar; tribal-dominated Sarguja and Shahdol districts of Madhya Pradesh; and Malda district of West Bengal to pick up children. They go into the 'labour catchment' areas during festival time and contact village pradhans or any women who liases for them with the parents for procuring the children. They induce the parents to send their wards to work in the looms assuring them a pay of Rs.500-1000 per month or they give an advance fee ranging between Rs.200 and Rs.2000. But during our visits to Sulindabad, Bangwa, Gopipur, Naula villages and Nauhatta

block of Saharsa district, and Khanjari and Salkhuwa villages of Khagaria district it was found that most of the children bonded in the looms of Allahabad, Bhadohi and Sonebhadra were lured away from their parents on the promise of training them in the crafts so that they can start earning in about six months. 15,000 children from Saharsa were held captive since 1991, mostly in the carpet looms of Allahabad, for whom the parents have not been paid a single penny. Around Bhadohi we also met children brought from Manikpur-Karwi area of Banda district of UP as fresh recruits. Whenever any attempt had been made by the parents or child rights groups to liberate the children the loom owners have either whisked the children away through back doors, hidden them in the fields or beaten, harassed and humiliated their parents. Some children have also been sold to other loom owners whose whereabouts are not disclosed.

CATEGORIES OF AGENTS INVOLVED IN CHILD TRAFFICKING:

Category 1. Loom owner -Agent: They belong to the carpet-belt and have their own loom sheds. Over time, these loom owners have developed their own contacts in 'labour catchment' areas. They have built up a direct rapport with the parents of the targeted children whom they try to recruit for their looms. The agents of this category are addressed as 'seth' or 'mallik'. To widen their sphere of influence they lend money to the parents before trapping the child. To escape from possible police action or public outcry against child trafficking, they insist on the parents accompanying have built the child to the carpet belt. Agents of this category first get their work done through the children and then sell them to other loom owners.

Category 2 Non loom holder agent and labour contractor: This category also

belong to the carpet belt but they do not own any loom. On the basis of the order procured from the loom owners for number of child labourers specific they pick up children through their local agents who persuade the parents to send their children. Advance fee paid to the parents is gradually adjusted in the meagre wage a child labour gets. The deduction also includes travel expenses incurred while bringing the child to the work place. Commissions are paid to the agents /labour contractors per child.

Category 3: Local Agent turned major labour contractor: Their frequent visit to the carpet belt helps this category of agents in building direct contact with loom owners. Thus for gaining a better profit margin they involve in direct recruitment and supply of child labour to the loom owners. Since they belong to the 'labour catchment' zones, they are better trusted by the parents. They mostly operate within their caste or community.

Category 4: Local Agents: They collect full information about the child labour household and persuade parents to send their children. They lay the trap, accompany the children to the destination and are instrumental in pushing them to bondage. They keep the parents informed about their wards place of employment and assure them of bringing their children back whenever they require them. But most of the time it has been seen that they go back on their promises and betray the parents.

FAMILY SITUATION AND BACKGROUND:

Most of the migrant child weavers come from Musahar, a landless dalit community of Bihar. To a lesser extent child labour is also recruited from *Passi*,

chamar, Mallah, muslim and *adivasi* communities. When we visited Aushanpur, Bhati and Handia in Allahabad and Gopiganj and Deegh blocks of Bhadohi, having a larger concentration of bonded children, we were denied access to them by their employers and could not manage to talk to them even after using all sorts of subterfuges, such as we were surveying the scene for starting a school.

Of the overwhelming majority of 205 migrant children held captive by the loom owners in Allahabad and Bhadohi with whom we wanted to interact, about 100 belong to the *Mushar* (rat eaters) community, and few from other dalit or backward castes, muslim or tribal communities. When we talked to their parents in Saharsa, Khagaria, Purnea and Garhwa we came to know that large family units with a mean size of 6.94, low social status, lack of schooling facilities, and the like seemed to have forced them to send their children in the carpet looms for employment.

The families of the bonded children or migrant child weavers barely manage to eke out a living. The only capital asset possessed by most of the households was their thatched hut given to them under the Indira Awas Yojana, whose possession papers they do not even have. Majority of them belong to the ever increasing force of landless peasantry. Some of them migrate to Punjab where they get better wages during the seasonal agricultural work.

A very few among them have small plots that could support them for a maximum period of only three to four months of a year. Families of landless labourers who stay back in their villages either work in others fields, brick quarries etc., or labour contractors take them to nearby towns for load

construction or land levelling work. The household incomes are invariably low. Almost all the women are engaged exclusively as maid servants in rich households, brick quarries or they accompany their men to Punjab or to nearby towns for road construction and land levelling work. Their low income levels act as an additional incentive for the male children to seek employment. Sudden death of employed males and illness in the family push others to the brink of disaster. One child labour from Khagaria (Bihar) working in a loom in village Bagahan, Handia block, Allahabad, reported that when his mother was suffering from Tuberculosis, his father took a loan of Rs.2000 from Ram Tirath, the loom owner to pay for her treatment. Confronted by such circumstances his family had little choice between work and schooling of the child, particularly when wages were assured after 6 months training in March 1991. But he still has not got a single paisa from Ram Tirath. Only 20 out of these 205 child workers belong to a household whose head or the elder brother was a carpet weaver. For the rest, carpet weaving was a new occupation.

WHAT COMPELS PARENTS TO PUSH THEIR CHILDREN INTO THE CARPET LOOMS:

A section of carpet manufacturer\exporters have often made powerful arguments in favour of employment of child labour for perpetuation of the system.

They have at times conceded that child labour is a necessary input for the production of export quality carpets. Behind the much-talked of nimble finger arguments, they state that nimble fingers and keen eyesight of early childhood proves to be an asset in learning the hereditary craft of carpet weaving. They

maintain that the carpet weaving skill percolates from one generation to another in a domestic ambience and further that, children if taught weaving at a tender age proficiency and adopt it as a source of livelihood in future. It sounds convincing when they argue that in childhood the body is flexible and pliable and hence can bend twice, stretch more easily to acquire postures required for knotting the carpets.

The other argument advanced against the forcing out of child labour is that it is of no consequence to the industry but only a concession to poor parents who are unable to feed their children and leave them at the door-step of the employer.

Furthermore, they state that child labour is employed only because of the carpet manufacturers desire to prevent juvenile vagrancy and to lessen the economic burden of the poor families. They are of this opinion that all talk of child labour exploitation is a mere fuss created by social activists and media.

However, a visit to Mirzapur-Bhadohi-Varanasi carpet belt presents a contrast to the arguments given in favour of child labour. We saw that in each loom where children in the age group of 6 to 9 are engaged ,they were found sitting intermingled with the older children and adults in a row of 5 to 7. The width assigned to a small child is not more than one foot while the bigger ones occupy 2 1/2 feet and all sit in one row to finish the entire width length. This shows that older children and men weave faster and better.

The much-talked nimble finger argument is a myth . It can be substantiated with one more example. During our field study we found children below 14 years

engaged in other ancillary processes such as cleaning, clipping etc. Except for companies, like, Obetee, E.A. Hill, Om carpets, Orient Carpets, Ram International etc. child labourers are seen working in the company premises, doing altogether a different job than actual weaving.

Children working in looms or company premises are paid pittance. Those who are held captive by the loom owners or brought from outside, especially from Bihar are

practically paid no wage at all. The parents of these children had been given advance fees of Rs.100 to Rs.500 and sometimes Rs.1000 when they were picked up from their villages by the loom owners or contractors. The loom owners or the touts deftly adopt ways of collecting fines, punishments and cuts in a child weavers promised wages and settle off almost the entire wage towards advance, thereby paying almost nothing for the entire period of 3 to 5 years till they are released from bondage. Thus, by keeping the bonded children, the loom owners or their contractors pay almost nothing, which they cannot do to an adult worker.

Carpet manufacturers/loom owners are increasingly in need of cheap labour in order to slash down the input cost and catch hold of an export market. For reducing the cost they find it easy to squeeze maximum work from child labourers at a minimal wage. Moreover, the employers are in need of passive and unresisting kind of labour and the child fulfils all those requirements. In the carpet industry children are pushed to such a situation where there is no other way out for them but to work for 14 to 20 hours a day out of fear.

During our visits to the principal carpet belt we talked to those who have been

working as weavers for years together and now vociferously claim that they can weave most intricate carpets ten times faster than the children below 14 years engaged by carpet units. But according to manufacturers like Mangal Carpets, Kailash Carpets, Persian Carpets & Rugs, Jaishankar Carpets etc. the industry can boom if the labour employed by carpet units are kept in tight control, and children below 14 years fit into their scheme of things. These manufacturers feel that they could be kept under constant vigil. "They can be coaxed, admonished, pulled up and punished for faults without jeopardising relations."

LOOM OWNERS PRESENT A CONTRASTING VIEW:

Loom owners are often projected as main exploiter of child labour. During our visit to the carpet principal belt the loom owners that we came across expressed that they are victims of the manufacturers and exploiters on the one hand, and of the parents of the child workers and officials of the labour department, on the other. The majority of the loom owners with whom we interacted are small and marginal farmers, and belong to backward communities. Many of them are not traditional weavers but have joined the trade during the last decade or so with the idea of earning an additional income to enhance their economic status. In the looms that we visited, we saw loom owners themselves weaving carpets along with other members of their families or hired workers.

The loom owners admitted that they preferred child workers for two reasons: the first, their endurance, particularly the ability to sit behind the looms for long hours, and the second, and more important reason was that the child workers are non-demanding and work without grumbling. Further, they feel that carpet

weaving being basically a monotonous job, adults do not like doing it.

Most of the loom owners do not pay wages to the child weavers in the normal sense. In the carpet belt some loom owners pay a lump sum amount ranging between Rs.100 and Rs.2000 as loan or advance wage to the parents for picking up their children. This amount is adjusted after completion of each carpet, depending upon the quantity and quality of weaving done by individual worker. Since advance is given more than once to the parents, the child worker has to work on two or three carpets or more till the 'advances' are fully adjusted. In case of loans, the interest is also added extending the period of adjustment further. The other practice followed by the loom owners, is to pay some money, a very low amount, to the child worker (Rs.2 to Rs.10 per working day, paid at the end of the month or about Rs.100 after completion of the weaving of the carpet). In this case the child is treated as an apprentice or a trainee before he or she becomes a full-fledged weaver. In percentage terms, the children who worked against advance form about 40 percent of the child workers in the 50 villages of Allahabad, Bhadohi, Shahjahanpur and Sonebhadra districts, and child workers who worked for wages form about 60 percent.

In the 50 villages which we visited loom owners themselves picked up children from Saharsa, Katihar, Khagaria, Samastipur and Palamau districts of Bihar without depending on the 'touts'. Most of the parents of the child workers of these villages have not been paid any advance. The child workers of these looms face a kind of forced labour and exploitation that traditional bondage implies.

JUSTIFICATIONS AND ITS FALLACY:

Most of the attempts at justification cited for employment of child labour in the carpet industry are invalid or at best weak. The prevailing abysmal situation with child labour in carpet industry, stemming from the ineffectiveness of the various policies and measures adopted by the government, is indicative of the fact that the basic approach is unrelated to the root of the problem.

There is no statutory protection for the children workers in the carpet industry. The Factories Act (1948) bans employment of children only in units using 10 persons or more with power or 20 persons or more without power. Even the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act,1986, excludes family labour which removes a large number of small-scale units that operate as household family units from its purview. As a result carpet manufacturers are opening more home-based carpet looms in which the whole family can be engaged. In family looms children are employed as it is believed to be a cheaper and stable proposition, and therefore a profitable one.

Children are employed for lower wages than adults and are made to work for longer hours. The knotting-rate remuneration to child labour, benefits the employers. Children do not form unions; they are less likely to change jobs quickly. The benefits to employers are so many that they would rather stop production than hire adult worker because of the great reduction in profits.

Child labour in carpet industry is considered more adept at labour-intensive tasks that categorise the method of production in cottage industries. Therefore, not only employing children keeps the wage bill low, it also acts as disincentive to modernise and use less labour-intensive technology, which would be a costly

proposition. Child labour is considered an asset to the manufacturers, loom owners and contractors. The reason being that children can be easily laid-off in case of a slack in demand, without compensation, and therefore make ideal employees in the export-based carpet industry where demand is variable. The lower costs thus effected allow exporters/manufacturers to sell their products at lower prices, thereby apparently getting a competitive advantage. The so-called advantages to the employers of using juvenile labour force, are limited and in the long run and would cost them heavily since improvements in efficiency and quality is compromised by using obsolete technology and child labour. However, in the long run carpet units employing child labour are bound to lose out to better and more efficient methods of production.

Further, the damage done to children that are pushed to the carpet looms very early in life makes them unfit for employment later. In many instances the hazardous conditions under which they work result in chronic ailments like ascariasis, night blindness, scabies and other skin diseases, constipation, back ache etc. making them unfit for continuing to work from an early age. As a result most of their adult life they earn much less than they could have earned had they not been forced into working in childhood. Besides, the so-called acquired skills do not in any way augment the earning capacity of the children as most of the jobs done by them are highly monotonous, low skilled, tedious jobs that condemn them forever in low paying jobs. Clearly, the earnings foregone in adult life, due to disabilities or lack of training and education that could have been attained in childhood, are far greater than what is earned as a child.

COST STRUCTURE OF CARPETS AND WAGES:

Carpet manufacturers get a subsidy from the Indian Government and about 8 1/2% of the final price of a carpet is earned as a profit by wholesalers and retailers abroad:

Costing of the carpet:

The costing per square foot for a carpet having 10x14 per square inch for a size 4'x6'=24 sq. ft. (Oriental carpet made up of Indian worsted wool)

Direct Manufacturing Cost:

Wool: 65.00

Cotton: 15.00

80.00

Costing through contractor:

Wool: 65.00

Cotton: 15.00

80.00

Weaving 77.75

Commission 16.25

Graph 3.35

Finishing 5.55

182.90

Weaving

Labour 100.00

Graph : 3.35

Finishing 5.55

188.90

Overheads

13% 23.78

24.56

206.68

213.46

Average cost Rs.210 per sq.ft.

The selling price to a customer in Germany comes to Rs.369.52 per sq.ft. for a 4'x6' carpet. The cost break up is follows:

| | |
|--|--------|
| Selling price | 175.00 |
| Freight + insurance (paid by buyer or exporter) | 5.00 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 180.00 |
| Clearing charges in Europe 5% | 9.00 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 189.50 |
| Wholesaler mark-up 30% | 56.85 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 246.35 |
| Retailers mark-up 50% | 123.17 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 369.52 |

From the above figures, it can be seen that the average cost is Rs.210 sq.ft., and the manufacturer sells it at Rs.175 and hence loses Rs.35 per sq.ft. Government gives a drawback of 8 1/2 % of the total FOB value. Nowadays

each carpet manufacturer earns 10 to 15% profit. If there is no Government incentives, the carpet industry would die out since over 90% of the carpets are exported.

WHAT WEAVERS GET AS WAGES:

In the carpet industry wages to the labour constitutes 47% of the cost. Each weaver works on a 2 ft. span. Two weavers are needed for a carpet of 4'x6'. They can weave 2.5 to 3 inches per day. It will take them approximately 48 working days. An average worker takes at least 60 working days. Two workers in 2 months on an average earn Rs.1872 i.e.Rs.936 each, which comes to Rs.468 per month. So, for a carpet which is bought by a German consumer for Rs.10,000, the child weaver, if paid, gets Rs.936 after working for 60 days and the manufacturer gets a profit Rs.600 for a high quality carpet. For a poorer quality carpet the labour component is only 40% and hence many a times children are not paid.

CHILD LABOUR AND COMPETITIVENESS:

Arguments advanced in favour of competitive advantage of carpet industry are based on nothing but sham pretexts when children engaged are subjected to most inhuman labour practices. Due to poverty and backwardness, there is infinite supply of child labour and therefore 'distress sale' of labour power. In the backdrop of the strong consumer movement culminating into independent initiatives against buying of carpets produced by children should one see the export potential of hand-knotted carpets. It all depends on whether the Government is interested in resolving the conflicts between its understanding of

the problem of child labour and its objective of earning foreign exchange. The state, of course claims that child labour is a 'harsh reality' produced by poverty which forces many families to send their children to work to ensure survival. In this situation how the government is going to eradicate child labour when the objective of foreign exchange earning is first in its agenda can be a matter of speculation only at this stage.

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III. THE RUGMARK INITIATIVE AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IN ERADICATING CHILD LABOUR

Vinod, a 10-year old boy worked as a carpet weaver for two years in village Dariyan of Bhadohi district. His father, also a carpet weaver, was falsely implicated in a theft case and put behind the bars. Then, after his release from the jail, he was killed allegedly by the nexus of carpet manufacturers-loom owners and local police. His mother, a farm labourer took him to work in the loom and share the family burden. A week after joining the loom the 8-year old boy had the most traumatic experience of being hanged upside down and thrashed mercilessly for a minor fault. Whenever he sustained injuries while using sharp knife to trim the carpet knots, his employer did not want to lose the working hours by giving medical care to him. Instead he used to fill the wound with matchstick powder and burn them. As he showed us his flesh and skin got burnt. Vinod was not paid a single penny for a year. After persistent attempts made by his mother Vinod was paid just Rs.25-50 for each rug that he wove amounting to not more than Re.1 per day. This was against his work for 12 to 14 hours in the loom. He was freed from the clutches of the loom owner when Rugmark inspectors found him during the spot-checking and then a pressure

was put on the carpet manufacturer who hired the loom either to get the Vinod and other child weavers released or loom disengaged. Then he was freed.

"I want to forget those horrifying days in the loom. Balsahrya has altered my life style and thinking. During my Diwali chutti (vacation) when I went to my village my mother was happy to see me. She remarked that when I was working in the loom I had sunken looks and kept myself aloof from others but now she thinks that I am bubbling with energy. My *mai* (mother) always tells me to concentrate more on studies and take it as a Sadhana (mission). While talking to others she says that 'Balashrya' has kindled a glimmer of hope in our poor family where everyone was 'anpadh' (illiterate)." adds Vinod .

Vinod's observation astounds us. He presents the facts in a most simple and lucid style. Ramdhani Yadav, a trained post graduate teacher of the junior class in Balashrya, opened on October 31, 1996 at Gopiganj, Bhadohi, says, " Villagers of Dariyan think that Vinod's learning in Rugmark Balashrya has build up his motivation, self-esteem, confidence and ability." "Students like Vinod have an extraordinary knack for grasping the things faster than ordinary boys. We have at least 10 students like him enrolled in our Balashrya. In this rehabilitation centre students hail from Bhadohi, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Saharsa and Khagaria. 17 children out of the total worked in family looms and remaining were picked up by loom owners or their touts from their villages. They were in servitude. Most of them have now developed reading and writing skills and they have an urge to become economically independent. Few are fast in acquiring skills in vocational courses like tailoring, carpentary and painting. In vacations when they go back to their villages some of them try to enlighten their brethren to unite and struggle for their rights and not fall in the trap of the carpet magnate or their

touts. "Who knows better than them about slavery and its impact and who else can fight against servitude with such tenacity and transparent honesty?" asks Yadav.

The observation of a freed child labour as well as his teacher clearly demonstrates the visible impact of Rugmark's rehabilitation and education programme in a short span of 30 months of its operation. It was an outcome of an independent international mechanism developed by NGO's, exporters, importers, export promotion bodies, funders and international relief organisations.

However, after assessing the alarming situation in the carpet industry where on one hand the export earning had increased from Rs.848.6 crore in 1977-78 to Rs.1202.1 crore in 1989-90, and on the other hand the number of children working at looms jumped from 100,000 in 1975 to 420,000 in 1989, and the fact that two hundred NGO's came together and formed the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS) in 1989 for launching a carpet awareness campaign in international level, Dr. Lenin Raghuvansh, National Convenor, *Bachpan Bachao Andolan* (BBA) which is a partner of the SACCS, an umbrella organisation commented, "The international campaign against carpet child labour was a historical necessity as the domestic pressures against the inhuman practice was of little consequences. For its 'export earning' the carpet industry was pampered a lot and given a 'blue eyed' status. Though Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, (CLPRA) 1986 specifies carpet weaving as hazardous industry, many employers engage children under the garb of family trade. The CLPRA allows the child employer to circumvent the law. It is a reality that till date no child employer had been punished. Similarly,

despite Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976, no employer had been jailed. We all felt that there was a dubious parallel between the increase of carpet export from India and other South Asian countries and the magnitude of child servitude were steadily moving because of the avariciousness of employers and importers apart from lack of knowledge among consumers about the horrendous plight of the children in servitude whose blood and sweat are the very fibres of the carpet they buy."

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS AGAINST CHILD LABOUR :

The 1990's saw the initiation of a growing partnership between NGO's in India and in Germany, later this was extended to similar organisations in Netherlands, Sweden, UK and the USA. These partnerships raised the level of awareness and educated the carpet consumers in these countries about child labour with a view to receiving consumer support and solidarity. In 1991 the United Nations Human Right Commission (UNHRC) recommended that "products such as carpets whose manufacture is liable to involve child labour should bear a special mark guaranteeing that they have not been produced by children." this gave a boost to the NGOs efforts.

In 1992, Senator Harkin's-Brown Child Deterrence Bill was introduced in the US House of Senate. It revealed the protectionist intention behind the outcry against child labour. US approach was an attempt to eliminate child labour without poverty alleviation. The bill directed: 1) the US Secretary of Labour to compile and maintain a list of foreign industries and their host countries that use child labour in the production of the exports, 2) the Secretary of US Treasury to

prohibit the entry of the identified industries, unless a certification is received by US importers of the goods being free of involvement of child labour,³) The President of the US to seek agreements with other Governments to secure an international ban on such products.

The Bill was an instrument intended to strengthen the then existing trade laws favourable to the US. It was based on the strategy of using international pressure and trade sanctions with the belief that child labour can be eradicated without making any frontal attack on poverty. The causes of the prevalence of child labour are multifaceted and largely domestic with just 8% of the total child labour force engaged in the export sector.

Furthermore, in view of the pervasive existence of child labour in violation of national and state laws, the clause mooting the identification of the foreign industry and respective host countries not complying with such laws was fraught with danger. Any and every industry and product would have come within this clause.

Other issues concerning the infringement on the nations' sovereignty and independence were also of concern. Child Deterrence Act came at a time when dominant trading partners have been systematically dismantling tariff and non-tariff barriers in developing nations that provided them with some advantage. When the social clause discussions started world-wide the Senator Harkin's-Brown Bill was shelved.

SOCIAL CLAUSE:

When Development NGO's in Germany, Netherlands and other European nations made proposals to include social clause in multilateral trading systems it comes as a Sequel to the Harkin's Bill. German NGO's commented that "under certain conditions, it considers minimum social standards in international trade agreements a good way to ensure a wider observation of basic human rights." Further, it stated that " we cannot accept that in the process of further liberalisation of world trade, basic human rights can be violated in the production of goods without any relevant consequence. We think that trade policy can be effective instrument to enforce some basic human rights related to the world of production and trade. But in the formulation and implementation of Social clauses we have to

Consider the comparatively weaker market positions of many third world countries and their competitive advantages. We must avoid that social clauses are misused as a new means to protect weak industries and markets of industrialised countries and weaken the market access of producers from third worlds." (KLAUS PIEPEL , Statement EECOD/ APRODEV/ EUROCIDSE workshop on Employment, human rights and development. The debate on Social Clauses, 1994)

German NGO's proposals for the protection of the rights of the marginalised were being sought via trade arrangements which were inherently weighed against developing countries. The proposal to include the social clause in the instrument of WTO was made by governments of developed countries, towards the penultimate stages of Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations. The social

clause in WTO gives authority to ban imports of goods produced in another country which violates pre-defined International labour standards. The developing countries are asked to agree to a set of labour standards (starting with ILO standards on child labour, the right to association and work safety, which could later be expanded to include wage levels). But it is paradoxical that the proposal made by multilateral bodies like the ILO and UN Treaty Bodies which were propagating human rights component in labour standards, failed to ratify international standards. Enforcing labour standards by linking them with trade, especially through the instrumentality of the WTO or any other multilateral trade institutions gives social clause its specificity. The intention behind the move of the developed countries is also to weaken the international labour movement and to serve their protectionist interest.

After signing the multilateral trade agreements in Marrakesh in April 1996 the NGO's collaborated with the Indo German Export Promotion Project (IGEP), and the Carpet Manufacturers Association Without Child Labour (CMAWCL). With a support from the UNICEF and the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) – the Rugmark Foundation (RMF) was formed. The aims of the RMF were as follows: 1) to develop and introduce Rugmark label for carpets not woven by children (both in servitude and child weaver), 2) to campaign for the introduction of trade related legal measures and promote the goods without child labour, and 3) to develop rehabilitation and educational projects to help freed child labour and children of carpet weavers.

RMF developed a label, which portrays a 'smiling face' for those carpets the manufacturers of which give an undertaking of manufacturing carpet free of illegal child labour. It was in consonance with the market forces, fulfilling the

wishes of the buyers for elimination of inhuman labour practices. The label is not simply a voluntary certification programme but a marketing tool to boost up the declining trend in the carpet exports from India. It is based on discipline and integrity manufacturers\exporters, who want to do business without using child labour combined with checks and supervisions by Rugmark (RMF) has its main office in Delhi, supported by a regional office in Varanasi for its operations in the principal

carpet belt. The unique characteristic of Rugmark lies in its independent international monitoring mechanism outside the framework of WTO .In Rugmark the WTO is not an arbitrator for enforcement of labour standards. It has not been usurped by the government or any powerful groups.

Says Vikas Maharaj, a tabla maestro and a front-ranking activist in the anti-child labour movement," Rugmark is a mechanism to monitor, control, certify and label on carpets free of child labour - is a unique endeavour to educate and suggest alternatives to carpet consumers to give fillip towards trade promotion, to provide a conducive atmosphere leading to restoration of childhood and education for these children and aiming to open a floodgate of job oppurtunities to adults in hundreds and thousands".

IMPACT OF RUGMARK:

During the 2 1/2 years of its operation Rugmark issued licences to 144 exporters operating 17,859 looms, while over 4,66,317 carpets were certified, labelled and put on the market. Most of these are exported to Germany, the world's largest importer of Oriental carpets, and approximately one-third of the carpet exported

to Germany bear Rugmark label while, a growing number of importers in other countries, including Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States are increasingly asking for Rugmark-labelled carpets. Since its formation, spot checks by 12 Rugmark inspectors in Mirzapur-Bhadohi-Varanasi carpet belt and adjoining districts of Allahabad, Sonbhadra, Shahjahanpur, Azamgarh, Jaunpur etc. have found 942 children working illegally in 555 looms licensed by RMF. As of February 97, 174 looms were delicensed; most of the others were able to pass subsequent inspections.

| RUGMARK LABELS ISSUED AS ON Feb.1997 | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Licensees | Total No: of Looms | Looms Inspected | Looms With Child Labour | Child Labour Found |
| 144 | 17,859 | 16,836 | 555 | 942 |

As observed by Maj. General (Retd.) Satish Sondhi, Executive Director, Rugmark, "A number of newly licensed exporters have devised their own methods of inspection. Kaleen inspection and certification system launched by Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC), Ministry of Textiles was after when Rugmark earned the confidence and faith of the importers and exporters. Further, he says, "Earlier Obeetee initiative introduced by a big export company of a long standing, Obeetee Carpets, set up an inspection system. Its inspectors checked the quality of the weaving or if the looms weaving their carpets has engaged child labour or not. Obeetee inspectors could only decertify those looms who took up orders from their company. They could not check other manufacturer's looms. Moreover, it had no rehabilitation programme for the children freed from bondage."

| Number of Carpets With Rugmark Labels as on February 1997 | | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | Till 31.3.96 | 1.4.96 to 15.2.97 | Total |
| Handtufted carpets | 96,485 | 66,455 | 1,63,440 |
| Hand Knotted Carpets | 91,134 | 1,95,738 | 2,86,892 |
| Dhurries | 1010 | 14,975 | 15,985 |
| Total | 1,88,629 | 2,77,688 | 4,66,317 |
| <i>Source: RMF</i> | | | |

RUGMARK'S MODUS OPERANDI:

Rugmark-labelled carpets have their own numbers, identifying the loom and exporter. The labels are prepared individually, corresponding to the purchase order of the carpet. The network of controls is developed in a highly organised fashion. The exporters make available to the RMF a complete list of looms/sources from which they procure their carpets. These lists are regularly updated. All such looms must be registered with the CEPC. After a thorough scrutiny of the lists, the looms, which the inspectors have to visit the next day are earmarked by the Rugmark's regional office. The names of the looms appearing in the list, inspections are not disclosed to exporters, loom owners and even inspectors. Next morning a Rugmark official briefs the inspectors and hands them over the lists. 15 inspectors divide themselves in 7 different teams and start their journey to the looms. Looms are situated in the villages. Many a times there are difficulties in locating the looms. Villagers confuse them with Government Labour Inspectors who take bribes from the loom owners

employing child labour for a favourable report. Even then, they locate the looms and after entering it they check the ditch in the earth floor behind the loom if any child labour is hidden or not. If any child labour is found, then a report is prepared on a formatted sheet and sent to its main office in Delhi. In its follow-up the main office asks the exporter either to withdraw the child from the loom or disengage it. If the loom owner fails to comply then it would be decertified by Rugmark. The network of controls is highly organised and so far not one falsely labelled carpet has been identified by those opposing Rugmark.

John P. Mathew, the Regional Co-ordinator, RMF observed, that despite desperate attempts made by the anti-Rugmark lobby in the carpet belt, the label is gaining respectful popularity in many European countries as well as the NGOs in the United States and buying companies from Germany, UK, Netherlands, Canada and US are extending whole-hearted support to the fool proof inspection system of Rugmark. Absolute transparency in the execution of Rugmark inspection is openly witnessed and hailed by the representatives from these nations.

He further said," The wild allegations against Rugmark's inspection system incorruptibility is totally unfounded. Rugmark does not compel or force any exporter to take labels, instead it receives wholehearted support from the exporters. 12 Inspectors who are 'pillars of Rugmark' put 8 to 10 hours' hard work by visiting looms even in the distant corner whether it is hot summer, rain or chilly winter to spot check the looms. The system of inspection is based on checks and balances for minimising the possibility of corruption. Inspectors are imbued with zeal which emanates from our primary objective to eradicate illegal child labour from the carpet industry. Their dedication and commitment has

gone into earning Rugmark the confidence and faith of the people. Our critics have realised that Rugmark is quite unlike Kaleen, Obeetee or Care and Fair initiatives which promise but are unable to deliver".

Importers of Rugmark carpets agree to contribute 1% of the FOB price of the carpet. The amount is transferred to UNICEF to be exclusively used for funding the Rugmark Primary school opened on August 1996 in village Jagpur, Bairibisa in Bhadohi district for 300 children of carpet weavers and Rugmark Balashraya launched on October 1996 at Gopiganj, Bhadohi, as the rehabilitation centre for 75 to 100 freed bonded children and child weavers. The exporters also pay a fee of 0.25% from the FOB value of the carpet export-which goes towards financing inspections and infra-structural cost.

RUGMARK CARPETS- ITS PERFORMANCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET:

In the ever-shrinking international carpet market there is a boost-up in the sale of Rugmark-labelled carpets. In Companies like Om carpets, Ram International, Khan carpets, Orient carpets sale has shown an upswing which confirms the fact that labeling has a competitive potentiality of business promotion in the background of stagnation and recession. The export figures are as given below:

| | Pre-Rugmark Export | Post-Rugmark Export |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| OM CARPETS | Between 300 and 500 sq.m. | 10,41 sq.m. |
| KHAN CARPETS | Rs. 30 million | Rs. 60 million |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| ORIENT CARPETS | Rs. 20 lakhs | Rs. 60 lakhs |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|

These exporters feel that Rugmark is credible and reliable and it fulfils its role as an efficient export promoting instrument. According to Ashraf Khan of Khan carpets, one of the oldest export companies of Bhadohi, the Rugmark fulfils certain basic preconditions. Firstly, it is market-oriented on a voluntary and private initiative involving importers, exporters, export promotion bodies, donors, and Indian and foreign NGOs for keeping up the market. Secondly, manufacturers, exporters and loom owners had made a commitment voluntarily that they would employ adult labour in place of child labour. Thirdly, there is an element of regular control and monitoring by the Rugmark Foundation. Finally, to avoid negative repercussions on freed child worker and their families, RMF has paved the way for their education, training and welfare measures by opening Balashraya in Gopiganj, Bhadohi, for freed bonded children and child weavers.

Ever since the general concept of Rugmark was presented at the Domotex Fair at Hannover in January 1995 to the German and International carpet traders, the Rugmark-labelled carpet spurred commercial interest in several European carpet importing countries. Major importers, like, Tippech Kibek, Theo Keller, Roubeni GmbH, Meumann Import as well as some leading departmental stores, regional/local retailers and retail/mail order enterprises (such as Hertie, Quelle AG, Otto Versand and Neckermann) are exclusively importing Rugmark-labelled carpets. In Germany alone Rugmark-labelled carpets comprise 33% of the total import of carpets.

At the initial stage, German importers resisted the Rugmark labels because they

apprehended that if it catches on like 'Woolmark' label then Italian or Iranian carpets would be discriminated against for not carrying Rugmark label. But since the IGEP was backing the Rugmark and an initial subsidy of DM 20,000 was given for its promotion, it had a positive impact on the importers. In the beginning, major German companies such as Karstadt, Unger and Wohnland supported the further Rugmark initiative and gave push to the growing trend among German consumers to reject carpets made by child labour. German funding agencies namely BFW, TDH, and Miserior jointly pooled funds to facilitate opening of Rugmark's rehabilitational and educational programmes. In USA, there is a greater demand for Rugmark labelled carpets.

Rugmark's rehabilitation and educational programme for freed child labour:

Rugmark had launched its first rehabilitation project, Balashrya, on October 31, 1996, for freed child weavers at Gopiganj in the principal carpet belt of Uttar Pradesh. Literally meaning shelter for children, Balashrya was initially geared to accommodate between 75 and 100 children. It helps to them to facilitate their effective reintegration into the mainstream of life. During our visit to the institution 30 children were living in Balashrya. Out of these four have been liberated from the looms where they were working in servitude.

In Balashrya, the children are grouped under classes IInd and IIIrd, according to their age . The younger group has children below 10 years of age, while the other group includes children between 10 and 14 years. The junior ones receive basic literacy inputs, to acquire skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Informal discussions on health, hygiene and social issues, namely, the socio-political

structure, legal system, communal harmony, superstition, social evils etc. also are conducted. children are trained in various vocations, to help them to build qualities of leadership, discipline and concern for the oppressed and exploited through intensive counselling and orientation.

"Rugmark had identified 942 child weavers and bonded children in 555 looms through its 15 inspectors. Then, it puts up pressures on the manufacturers and loom owners to free the child labour from looms. After the children is withdrawn from the looms then, Rugmark intervenes and ask parents of the freed children to admit their wards in the Balashrya. A letter of consent from the parents are sought before inducting any children in the rehabilitation centre." As Captain Nautiyal, the Administrative Manager of Balashrya observes.

Rugmark opened its first primary school on August 1996 in village Jagpur, Bairibisa, Bhadohi. 250 children of carpet weavers from Jagpur and other nearby

villages have been enrolled in the school. Children between 6 and 13 years of age spend major part of the day in the school learning and playing. Thus it limits the risk of falling in the trap of the loom owners or their touts. Schooling of these children also benefit them so that they do not end up weaving carpets on the looms. As an incentive for ensuring full attendance in the school Rugmark has introduced free and nutritious mid-day meals. The school also provides them with uniforms, free books and stationery. Sudhangsu Shankar Mishra, principal of Rugmark primary school says," There are 3 classes in the school. Enrollment has been according to their age. 31 children were promoted to standard II and 51 children passed on to class 1. 168 out of 250 are studying in the nursery class which has a, b and c sections. In our school we plan to introduce classes

IIIrd, IVth and Vth very soon. Due to space crunch we have to send back many children who want to seek admission in our school.".

However, Prof. B.N Juyal, an eminent sociologist in his reports, quoted in many studies on child labour in the carpet industry of Mirzapur-Bhadohi area, said, "the children accommodated in Rugmark Balashrya were not children in servitude. Rather, they were picked up from family looms. Rugmark aim at opening floodgate of job opportunities for adult weavers after the withdrawal of child weavers from the looms. But, quite contrary to that in these looms the gaps were filled up by the younger siblings of the freed child labour who are below 14 years. People also say that during the admission of the children in Rugmark primary school a carpet magnate was given the full authority to decide, whom to enrol and whom to reject. The District Collector, Bhadohi, also alleges that children admitted in the school were withdrawn from nearby schools for admitting them in the Rugmark school." Regarding Rugmark's inspection system the sociologist remarked, "Rugmark's inspection system is no guarantee for checking the use of child labour in the carpet industry. Inspectors can check the abuse of child labour in the looms, but what about those children engaged in off-loom activities like cleaning, clipping and embossing of the carpet?" asked the scholar. He is emphatic that "The child-labour free carpets certified by Rugmark is nothing but farce. The reality is contrary to the popular belief. The carpets woven by children are being exported to European countries, including Germany with impunity. The system of certification has failed. In around 140 km long carpet belt, the method of labelling a few carpets is preposterous. If Rugmark was implemented with some vision and sincerity it would have helped in building up a social and economic pressure on exporters to eradicate the use of illegal child labour from the carpet industry."

Asked about the carpets made by child weavers exported to Germany and other European countries, the Regional Co-ordinator, John P. Mathew, replied, “When the demand is more and the looms are working overtime, then possibly some children might be working in the looms. “About the discrepancy he said,” when there is a high demand, people work overtime, and sometimes work is carried on in the night. How can Rugmark Foundation then ascertain whether child labour was used?” There are at least 145 exporters having the licence of RMF. We have 15 inspectors....of them four are part-time....who inspect around 18,000 looms. They inspect around 10 percent of the looms each. We are learning from our mistakes but we are committed to eradication of child labour from carpet fully within some years. Do not get swayed by the adverse campaigns. There are some positive impact of Rugmark’s activities spanning just 30 months. Despite all the overwhelming odds we are sure that we would be able to free the ‘future India’ bound in the shackles of socio-economic bondage.”

IV. SHIFTING OF LOOMS FROM CARPET BELT TO LABOUR CATCHMENT AREAS

The heightened awareness against child labour resulting out of Rugmark initiative and other campaigns, particularly in the principal carpet belt had forced a sizeable section of the carpet manufacturers to stealthily shift their weaving operations to Southern and North-western districts of Bihar. Yielding to social and economic pressures from within and outside the country as a sequel to Rugmark's campaign - the UP Government too had been tightening the screws of the carpet industries to avoid employment of children. Manufacturers\exporters from traditional carpet towns of Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi, Allahabad and Gorakhpur have discovered a new way to escape pressures from national and international bodies without affecting any tangible improvement. Instead of employing local children of these areas, the manufacturers are sending the work away to the impoverished villages of Garhwa, Palamau and West Champaran where child labour is cheap and abundant.

They send older boys to liase with the villagers for setting up looms in their homes. Each loom costs Rs.4000 which is paid by the manufacturer. The raw materials are provided by the contractors to the loom owners who remains in

constant touch with the child weavers. Most of the children whom we saw working in the looms in Garhwa belong to Dalit, tribal or muslim communities. Fewer children from these district now migrate to the carpet belt for jobs. The trend clearly stands reversed. The figures are shown below:

| <i>Villages</i> | <i>Looms employing Child labour</i> | <i>Number of child labour engaged</i> | <i>Child labour migrated to UP</i> |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| Tildagh | 15 | 112 | 7 |
| Kalyanpur | 20 | 114 | 5 |
| Peska/Pendli | 13 | 111 | 8 |
| Duldulwa | 16 | 113 | 3 |
| Kajrath | 12 | 110 | 7 |
| Tasrar | 20 | 117 | 7 |
| Rezo | 12 | 110 | 6 |
| Gonda | 13 | 110 | 3 |
| Bhandar | 14 | 111 | 3 |
| Marchaiya | 18 | 117 | 9 |
| Tatidiri | 16 | 113 | 7 |
| Chirka | 17 | 117 | 7 |
| Latdagh | 20 | 112 | 5 |
| Tenuwahi | 15 | 113 | 3 |
| Palhey | 20 | 119 | 15 |

Source: Child Development Project Society (CDPS), Garhwa.

Vivekananda Upadhyay of the Child Development Project Society (CDPS) says, "It is estimated that about 5000 looms have been set up in hundreds of villages of Garhwa district. Now carpet magnets are spreading their tentacles to the nearby Palamau district too. Most of the children employed in the looms there are from families of poor tribals." He further adds, that "for the poor families of predominantly agricultural region of Bihar, the child's earning through carpet weaving comes as a bonus. But the long time consequences would be disastrous. The very child who burn their childhood into carpet-weaving to be absorbed in the occupation later, to their chagrin, find themselves jobless. However even if the parents of the child-weavers know the fabulous returns on their hand-knotted products, they may not be willing to claim a better deal for themselves. To them whatever a child's labour earns it subsidises the meagre family income. The parents are now content that by working in the domestic ambience, the child is safe from several hazards of working away from home. They know that children who are picked by the 'touts' or labour contractors are beaten up, treated cruelly, provided little food, insufficient rest or even killed if they try to escape from the clutches of the employers in the principal carpet belt."

However, in the looms set up in the villages of Garhwa, children slog for 12 to 16 hours a day in the looms . Ashrafi Ansari, 13, of village Jamua, Nagar Utari says," Since 7 years of age I have been working in the loom owned by my maternal uncle.

Then his manufacturer asked him to shift the loom to a safer place where there are no raids or surprise checks by child-rights activists or any other organisation for employing child weavers like me. I am paid Rs.1000 for one

galicha (carpet) which normally takes 3 to 4 months. I work for 12 to 16 hours a day on the loom."

The Bagaha-III block of West Champaran district is swarmed by carpet manufactures who pick up children for setting up looms in these places. Presently, about 100 carpet looms employing 500 children belonging to Tharu and Munda tribes are functioning there. Sources in Saharsa district point out that carpet manufacturers are making forays into Sarguja and Shahdol district of Madhya Pradesh, adjoining the carpet belt in UP.

Thus RMF needs to look in to other factors also for effective implementation of its monitoring system. It has to broaden its area of operation. Focusing on the principal carpet belt would not tackle the vast reservoir of child labour force engaged in the looms of Rajasthan or Kashmir, or in the Barielly , Sonebhadra, Gazipur, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Gorakhpur ,Rae Barrelli etc. districts of UP. Looms would go on shifting to the 'catchment areas' where child labour is in abundance if socio-economic profile of these areas are not addressed. It is also important to note that the strategy to deal with the problem of elimination of child-labour should not sound death-knell for the carpet industry, which ensures survival for large sections of the dispossessed rural and urban poor. Effective mechanisms for the elimination of intermediaries (contractors, agents or touts), who play a pivotal role in perpetuating child labour and getting profit by ensuring their exploitation at the hands of loom owners or manufacturers, would go long way in this process.

V. PROFILES OF 2 ANTI-CHILD LABOUR CAMPAIGN GROUPS IN CARPET BELT

Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) (Save the Childhood Movement) and the Centre of Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) are two prominent groups that have been creating awareness among the people in the carpet belt about the continuing curse of child labour and to pressurising the power that be to implement various constitutional guarantee and pieces of legislating aimed at ending this long-standing social evil. These two NGO's have initiated the process of freeing child labour or children in servitude from the clutches of the loom owners. BBA & CREDA have also initiated project based action plans in Varanasi, Mirzapur and Bhadohi, by involving the local people.

BACHPAN BACHAO ANDOLAN (BBA): BBA was formed in November 1993, during the assembly elections of UP. Launched as a political campaign in stressed to the parties the need to include the eradication of child labour as an issue in their election manifestos. The campaign has created a tremendous impact on the NGO's,activists, village pradhans, villagers and others. This campaign also helped the BBA to build up a rapport with other grass-root activists who were later involved in the anti-child labour movements unleashed by BBA and its umbrella organisation, the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS).

In the November 1993 campaign, the BBA had set forth certain parameters. Through their 2000 volunteers, interacted with the candidates fielded by different political parties and gathered their opinion on eradication of child labour\servitude. The opinions of candidates whose views were in favour of child labour elimination and free and compulsory education for all children, were recorded and appended with a signed pledge. BBA classified the candidates as Pro-childhood and Anti-childhood. It marked 347 MLA's out of 422 elected legislatures of UP Vidhan Sabha as Pro-childhood. With its roots in Bandhua Mukti Morcha the BBA is slowly emerging as mass a movement. The activists target looms and raid them, physically freeing children from their slavery. BBA and SACCS have together freed 8000 bonded children from the carpet industry, "We are approached by parents of bonded children to do something,"said the BBA General Secretary, R.S. Chaurasia. "Before the raids are conducted we approach the authorities and give details, putting into paper the detailed report and urge them to rescue the bonded children. To our utter dismay we found that the information was leaked by the authorities to the exploiters. Often children were beaten and tortured as a result." said the General Secretary also a veteran trade union activist.

"When we started raiding places where children are kept in bondage, it created tremendous awareness. This was first intervention of its kind. No organisation dared to help or rescue these children before," said Chaurasia.

After the children are liberated, BBA and SACCS get them a social support and return them to their families. After a short stay at home the freed children are brought to Mukti Ashram, situated on the outskirts of North-East Delhi, in

Ibrahimpur village. The Ashram is a transit rehabilitation centre which aids freed bonded children to regain self-esteem and a free way of life by providing them with alternative economic sustenance.

“Our organisation, after freeing the children, observed that the unholy nexus between the police, loom owners and carpet manufacturers, coupled with bureaucratic apathy delayed the rehabilitation process. The freed child was again pushed to slavery due to lack of awareness and precarious socio-economic condition. These children are entitled for rehabilitatory benefits under various government schemes.

Mukti Ashram run by BBA and SACCS tend for 60 trainees at a time. All the cost are borne by the centre. The trainees are grouped under two categories, according to their age. The younger lot consists of children below 13-14 years and the other one consists of boys above this age. The junior ones receive basic literacy inputs, to acquire the minimum skills of reading, writing and calculation. Informal discussions on health, hygiene and social issues, namely on socio-political structure, the legal system, communal harmony, superstition, social evils, women etc. are also conducted. This makes the trainees aware of their social responsibilities. The three-month course may be prolonged if the trainees need more time to acquire a particular skill.

The BBA believes that the December 1996's Supreme Court order banning child labour from hazardous and non-hazardous industries and on rehabilitation of child labourers has made little difference to the victims and their families who continue to grope for justice. It pointed to two cases where the mothers of two bonded children had been running from pillar to post to free their children from

the looms in the Mirzapur-Bhadohi belt. In 1994, Manoj was abducted from Bihar by touts of the carpet manufacturers and taken to a loom in a remote corner of Bhadohi district. Since then his mother Paria Devi, a farm labourer has been knocking the door of the administration to free her 9-year old son from the clutches of loom owners. “Manoj was kidnapped when his mother was working in the fields. He slogs for 12 to 16 hours without adequate food, shelter and wages,” said Chaurasia. The story of 36-year old Karia Devi is much the same – the only difference being that her 6-year old son, Manjit was not kidnapped, but promised wages and education by a broker scouting the poor districts of Bihar for picking up children to work in the looms. Karia Devi sent her son but went to fetch him a year later, after taking Rs.200 as loan to pay back the advance taken from Manjit’s employer. “But the loom owner turned down Karia Devi’s appeal and mercilessly thrashed the boy in front of his mother,” said Chaurasia. The distraught mother, in a last-ditch effort turned to Ghuran Mahto, BBA’s Bihar state convenor, who has his office in Saharsa district. Karia Devi reached the BBA office the same day that the SC gave its ruling on child labour. BBA activists got into action and approached various officials for succour, hoping that the judgement would make difference to the administration’s attitude. In February 1997 when I met Chaurasia, a month and half had passed and nothing had happened.

The accounts of the women confirm BBA’s fears about the inefficacy of the apex court’s judgement. Their fears stem from their doubt as to whether the Government and its machinery can be relied on for effective implementation, as it had earlier gone back on its solemn commitments in Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. “The machinery and its class character is the same which failed to ensure the compliance of CLPRA, 1986.” said Chaurasia.

BBA and SACCS have opened 50 schools in different parts of the country where in the industries child labour is used in abundance. 10 out of 50 schools are in the carpet weaving zones. In UP the organisation has 9 schools – 2 each in Gazipur, Sonbhadra , Mirzapur and Bhadohi and 1 in Varanasi. The remaining school was started in Laharpura, Rajasthan where there is a huge concentration of child weavers in the looms of BBA and SACCS. The chairperson, Kailash Satyarthi got the support of the consumer group and he conducted workshops for carpet manufacturers regarding changes in their way of doing business. In 1993 he convened a working group of activists, government officials and manufacturers to put Rugmark certification plan into action. Satyarthi is also one of the directors of RMF.

In January 1997, BBA and SACCS along with 250 NGOs launched a nation-wide campaign viz., “Education for liberation – liberation for education”. BBA and SACCS aim to mobilise the masses for building up a consistent and protracted movement for land reforms so that the fruits of the struggle trackle down to the poorest of the poor. BBA is of the opinion that if the movement makes the poor parents aware then they would not accept a ‘beast of burden’ status for their children and push their children to the looms for a few morsels of food. BBA and SACCS campaign also include the objective of involving themselves and their associate organisations in the anti-displacement movements, prominent among which are the Narmada Bachao Andolan, Ganga Himalaya Bachao Andolan, Koel Karo struggle etc.

CENTRE FOR RURAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACTION (CREDA):

CREDA is a Mirzapur-based NGO which is active in the carpet belt since 1982. It has a comprehensive approach in the eradication of child labour from the carpet units. It includes interventions such as education, training, welfare services, protected work, advocacy, regulation and enforcement in its programmes for child labour eradication. "Interventions are applied at the principal levels in the social fabric of the society – the child, family, the community and the Government." Observed Shamshad Khan, the chairman of CREDA. CREDA's activities are based on objectives, such as, 1) the rescue of bonded children from the carpet weaving units and provision of formal education and rehabilitation scheme for the freed children, and 2) initiation of political and social pressures on the loom owners and manufacturers to employ adult weavers for reasonable salaries and employment benefits.

In order to achieve its primary objective of total elimination of child labour, CREDA has set up 23 schools and rehabilitation centres in the impoverished villages of Mirzapur district. Each centre protects about 50 children (both boys and girls) under the guidance of 2 teachers and the supervisor. A Centre caters to the village populace within the radius of 5 kms. Children are in the age group of 8-14 years. CREDA prepares them for the sixth class in the formal schools. Students are also given training in vocational courses like, tailoring, carpentry, carpet weaving etc. Mid-day meals are also provided to these children along with recreational facilities. Periodical health check up of the children are done by a qualified medical practitioner. About 300 children from 5 CREDA centres have completed their 3-year course and have been enrolled in the sixth standard of the nearby Government schools. According to Shamshad Khan about 40 villages in Mirzapur have been declared 'child labour free zones'.

We visited the child labour rehabilitation centres at Bikana, Dabur, Lakhania and Sonbharsa villages in Mirzapur district. All these centres were situated in the tough terrain where there was hardly any sign of human habitation. Each centre had their classes either in the open or in rooms. Some of these centres also provided training to the mothers of freed child labour and conducted literacy classes. Most of the children whom we met at the centre narrated horrifying stories of torture of their servitude in the looms. Often they were beaten and hanged upside down for minor mistakes. They were not paid their wages even after a hard toil of 12-16 hours. Majority of the children belong to families of landless labourers.

Shamshad Khan reiterates that despite resentment shown by the local carpet manufacturers who attempt to defame him by framing concocted charges against him he would continue to wage his battle against child labour. The impact of the work done by CREDA on the marginalised section is definitely tremendous, but compared to the inhuman labour practices it is only a tip of the iceberg. "It is obvious that we have miles to go and lot more have to be done to restore these children in servitude," said the CREDA chairman.

Though Shamshad Khan is one of the Directors of Rugmark Foundation, he is critical of its activities. Regarding Rugmark Balashraya he alleged, "Children enrolled in Balshraya had never worked in any loom. They were withdrawn from the nearby schools. RMF is using the children as pawns for serving their selfish interest." When asked about the Regional Co-ordinator RMF, he replied, "Earlier Rugmark was operating as per his whims and desires. But after my appointment Rugmark is working independently, free from bias or prejudice. We take his suggestions but not follow his dictation."

VI. OBEETEE AND KALEEN INITIATIVES

OBEETEE's strategy for the elimination of child labour:

Child labour is used in the carpet industry since 1816 when Shielk Rahamatulla & sons get up its manufacturing unit in the region. But to combat the menace of inhuman labour practices. OBEETEE Carpets, one of the oldest manufacturers and exporters, were the first to launch in 1980's an initiative against child labour by maintaining its profitability. OBEETEE initiative was launched in 1986 through a system of field supervision. The monitoring mechanism was propelled by the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. Through major field operations it attempted to set up management information system (MIS) with the required computer facilities. OBEETEE took the initiative of setting up a three tier monitoring mechanism. It consisted of loom supervisors, loom in-charges and officers. The initiative's essential difference from the general practice was that the loom in-charge was a paid employee of the company and not a contractor on a commission basis.

OBEETEE's operations :

OBEETEE has 19 depots with a deport in-charge in each who is an employee of

the company. One to three loom supervisors inspect the looms every 15 days to spot check the illegal use of child labour, weaving quality, raw material requirement etc. Each depot's jurisdiction is a radius of 10 to 20 kms. A reasonable output of a depot is 5000 to 6000 dehari (1 dehari = 6000 knots) a month. The ideal one's output is 10,000 dehari. High quality carpets give lower dehari in a month whereas lower qualities give higher dehari. If a depot covers 300 looms it is given three loom supervisors. Presently 2700 looms have been engaged by OBEETEE, spread over eight districts of UP. In 1993 it engaged 3500 looms. Besides the depot incharge and loom supervisors, executives from the main office also visit the looms. Their visits for spot checking are not disclosed to anyone.

Initially when the spot checking of looms were started in 1986 there was strong resentment among the loom owners. But the loom owners were warned that if they did not respond then the carpets would be taken off and no subsequent orders given. This proved to be effective and child labour in the looms gradually decreased. Besides, when the loom owners come to a depot to pick up raw materials they are also given a photostat copy of the CLPRA, 1986, and December 1996 Supreme Court ruling on banning of child labour in hazardous and non-hazardous industries. The loom owners also have to give a signed declaration that they would not employ child labour on their looms.

There were disputes with the loom owners pertaining to the age of the child weavers. Fictitious age certificates were easily procured by the loom owners by bribing the Government officials. Many a times weavers rationalised the illegal use of child labour by claiming that the child was engaged by a family loom. Since CLPRA, 1986, allows children to be engaged in family work. To stop the misuse of the CLPRA, 1986, OBEETEE collects the family details of the loom

owner and the child engaged by the loom. If any loom is found to be engaged by OBEETEE if child labour is found then it is replaced by adult weaver.

According to V.R. Sharma, Managing Director, OBEETEE and Vice-President Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC), OBEETEE's initiative and strategy for ensuring carpet manufacturing free of child labour was entirely its own, and not due to international or domestic pressures against child labour. Wages were increased as a result of the decision to ensure production free of child labour. Nonetheless, OBEETEE 's turnover of carpets took a downward trend as they took a decision to discontinue orders if they found the looms using child labour.

OBEETEE has not launched any rehabilitational programme as it was an impossible task for one company to cover the entire carpet belt in which weaving was done. However financially it contributes to Project Mala, a school run for children freed from carpet industry and other local children.

RUGMARK AND OBEETEE – A COMPARISON

OBEETEE initiative was launched by one of the largest carpet export companies for effectively promoting business, but not as an instrument of social justice like Rugmark. OBEETEE's limitation was that its loom supervisors who were engaged by the company could only operate within 2700 looms spread over eight districts of UP. On the other hand Rugmark inspectors, in 30 months of its operation have visited 17,859 looms and identified 945 children in servitude as child weavers. OBEETEE has no programme of rehabilitation or education for freed child weavers. It only contributes financially in the Project Mala, jointly run by Children Emancipation Society and CEPC. Project Mala is not exclusively meant for children freed from the clutches of the loom owners or children of

carpet weavers. In contrast Rugmark runs Balashrya for the freed child weavers or bonded children and it had opened up a school for children of carpet weavers exclusively so that they do not fall into the trap of the loom owners or carpet manufacturers. OBEETEE initiative could not involve carpet manufacturers\exporters, importers, NGO's, funders or export promotion bodies but Rugmark could do that successfully.

KALEEN AND RUGMARK ;

KALEEN label was introduced in June 1995 . CEPC charges its members 0.25% of the FOB value of their carpets from all types of hand made (including hand tufted) woollen, silk and art-silk (synthetic), carpets, druggets, durries etc. for child welfare fund. The fund is utilised to run 5 schools where freed child labourers and local children from the carpet belt are admitted. These schools are run in collaboration with the NGO's

Rugmark was precursor to the KALEEN launched by the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC). However NGOs associated with Rugmark which now emerged from the involvement of people and organisations working to free the carpet industry from the scourge of child servitude considered CEPC, set up by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, had no credibility become its membership was mandatory to enable one to export and needs of only a handful of big exporters who actually dictated terms, whereas RMF was not a regulatory body and it was not mandatory to subscribe to the RM labels.

VII. Annexes

1. STUDY ON RUGMARK INITIATIVE AND ITS FALLOUT

OBJECTIVES;

The study is concentrated in and around Mirzapur, Bhadohi and Varnasi where maximum number of children are employed by the carpet-making manufacturers. One of the primary objective of this work is to verify Rugmark initiative's impact in the carpet industries: (a) impact in the employment criteria, (b) whether gainful employment has got a foothold, and (c) whether new means are adopted to lure and exploit children. It also aims at cross checking the involvement of the locals in the Rugmark initiative and assessing its impact in the International Trade-Carpet Manufacturers Association Without Child Labour (CMAWCL) and Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC)'s role in eradicating child labour and making Rugmark initiative a reality.

The political and administrative initiative, the role of the NGO in eradication and rehabilitation of child labour, the Consumer Awareness, etc., are some of the other issues of investigation of this study in the carpet labelling system. How successful? The study proposes to cross check the monitoring system with the representatives and liaison group associated with the Asian American Free

Labour Institute, Child Labour Coalition and International Labour Rights Education and Research Fund (USA), National Consumer League (UK), Anti-Slavery International (Netherlands), Indian Committee of Netherlands (Belgium), Indian Workgroup and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (Brussels), Radda Barnen, BLLF (Sweden), and Asia Pacific Workers solidarity (APSWSL).

METHODOLOGY ;

The research methodology used are Sample surveys through a prepared questionnaire in the carpet industries, interviews with (a) Locals, (b) Manufacturers, (c) child labourers, (d) adult workers, (e) local officials, (f) politicians, (g) grassroot activists, (h) CMAWCL & CEPC officials, (i) Secretary, Union Ministry of Labour, (j) Under Secretary, Child Labour Cell, Ministry of Labour, (k) NHO's, (l) National Labour Institute, (m) Trade Union Organisations and (n) Representatives and liaison groups of International organisations who played a crucial role in spreading the message of Rugmark across the masses.

The time frame set out for the study was four months for an indepth study with two people required round the corner.

It involved visits to Varnasi, Mirzapur and Bhadohi for the indepth study, research and interviews. These works took about 40 days.

Cross checking with the Government officials, NLI Representatives and liaison groups and browse through their documents.

2. RATIONAL BEHIND STUDY ON RUGMARK INITIATIVE

The Indian carpet industry is almost wholly export-oriented. It also has a strong import component as far as the materials go. It has hardly any domestic market except for some inferior qualities, and export surplus or rejected goods. This makes it highly vulnerable to various types of manipulative practices used by foreign importers, as well as making the market fickle and uncertain. Until about the 1960's carpet manufacturing was mainly geared to the cheaper London market, that is the old Empire circuit comprising : England, Australia and a bit of Africa. With the emergence of India as an alternative to Iran for the supply of oriental carpets at cheaper prices, the Europeans, especially the German market, opened to it.

As these carpets were exported, the NGO's launched Awareness Campaigns in Germany, USA and other European countries to sensitise the consumers to the inhuman practices in the carpet industry. Consumer movements against certain products have already had a long standing tradition in the West, especially Germany. The Indo-German Export Promotion Programme (IGEP) was aware of the fact that the green activists attacked those who wore fur coats and this resulted in a total collapse of the fur market in Germany. To avoid a similar development whereby the carpet manufacturers might be blamed for using child labour, it felt the necessity to take appropriate action. In fact, there was a fear expressed of adverse publicity whose spill-over might jeopardise India's other products of export interest with similar 'sensitive' factors. However, as a part of

the overall Indo-German development co-operation programme, and to ensure maximum support for Indian carpet exports to Germany and other countries including by way of framework follow-ups and consciousness-creation among Indian exporters to take into account the legislative and other sensitivities of the buyers abroad, the Rugmark initiative was undertaken.

The apprehension about spoiling the image of India has been the main reason for offering a helping hand to the exporters. Faced with broad-based campaigns against child labour conducted by NGO's in Germany and other European countries, besides US, and even Japan, enormous problems were apprehended for carpet exports. Not only is the market for carpets under constant pressure due to worldwide supply, the fact that the campaign in these carpet-importing countries mainly concentrated on India. As a result, in many discussions of the IGEP (a trade promotion organisation), UNICEF, representatives of carpet industry, Carpet Manufacturers Association Without Child Labour (CMAWCL), NGO's etc., the idea of carpet labelling was developed. The label RUGMARK helps the consumers to avoid feeling guilt in buying a carpet without exactly knowing whether the manufacturing process involved exploitation of the poorest of the poor. RUGMARK has been created as a brand name for carpets with a credible production procedure.

Together with the representatives of carpet industry, IGEP, UNICEF, CMAWCL, NGO's etc., the RUGMARK FOUNDATION (RMF) was formed. Incorporated in September 1994, the RMF acts as an international, independent, legal, professional and non-commercial certification and monitoring system to guarantee, after random checks at carpet looms by professional experts, that not a single child is working in the units. If all the certification criteria are fulfilled

by the carpet manufacturers\exporters and loom owners, and the inspections carried out by the RUGMARK logo for his carpets. RMF does not intend to replace any government authority or act as a regulatory body in the carpet industry. The most important prerequisite for getting the RUGMARK label is the self-commitment of the manufacturers and exporters. There is no discrimination towards traders; they also can become members by assuring that they will stick to the basic principles. In addition, manufacturers and traders have to fulfil two more conditions :

1. They must get an affidavit by their suppliers or subcontractors that they function without child labour; and,
2. They have to agree to random checks at their looms, since the scheme will only maintain its credibility if such checks are carried out (in co-operation with the manufacturer's representatives or their managers).

After full compliance with the RUGMARK criteria, the right to use the RUGMARK label is granted to the respective exporters through a licence agreement, which defines the legal modalities for the use of the label. Any offence against the RUGMARK criteria is to lead to the withdrawal of the right to use the RUGMARK. From 1st April, 1996 onwards a licence fee equivalent to 0.25% of the f.o.b. value of carpet export has been imposed by the RMF authorities for the right to use the RUGMARK label. The importers have agreed to contribute 1% on the f.o.b. price of the carpet. This amount is transferred to the UNICEF to be exclusively utilised to fund educational, health and vocational programmes within the RUGMARK initiative.

The RMF is assisted by 12 inspectors for observation and monitoring of carpet-

weaving looms of the RUGMARK licensees\applicants. Around 200 Indian carpet export enterprises have so far associated themselves closely with RMF. Till October 16, 1996, 124 of these have been licensed to make use of the RUGMARK labels on their carpets made free of child labour.

Ever since the general concept of the RUGMARK was presented at the DOMOTEX fair at Hannover in January 1994 to the German and international carpet trade, the RUGMARK initiative has spurred commercial interest in several European carpet importing countries, especially Netherlands, UK, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway. Major German importers, like, Teppich KIBEK, Theo Keller GmbH, Meumann Import as well as leading departmental stores, regional\local retailers, and retail\mail-order enterprises (such as Karstadt AG, Hertie, Quelle AG, Otto Versand, Neckermann) have committed themselves to exclusive import of carpets from centres where the RUGMARK scheme has been introduced. In Germany alone out of the total carpet imports from India RUGMARK labelled carpets amount to nearly 30%.

RUGMARK STATISTICS AS ON 12.09.96

| Licenses | Total No. of looms | Looms inspected | Looms with child labour | No. of child labour |
|-----------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 114 | 16,155 | 11,233 | 451 | 758 |

NUMBER OF CARPETS WITH RUGMARK LABEL AS ON 12.09.96

| | Till 31.3.96 | 01.4.96 to 11.9.96 | Total |
|---------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Handtufted Carpets | 96,485 | 22,343 | 1,18,828 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Hand-knotted Carpets | 91,134 | 76,620 | 1,67,754 |
| Durries | 1,010 | 10,385 | 11,395 |
| TOTAL | 1,88,629 | 1,09,348 | 2,97,977 |
| Source : RMF | | | |

The RMF has taken interest in rehabilitational aspect as well. On August 23, 1996, the first RUGMARK primary school was opened in village Jagpur, Bairibisa in District Bhadohi. 250 children of carpet weavers from Jagpur and other neighbouring villages have been enrolled in the school. Children between the age group of 6 and 13 spend major part of their day in the school learning and playing, thus limiting the risk of their ending up weaving carpets on the looms. The school imparts education on both formal and non-formal streams – of both carpet weavers children as well as children liberated from carpet industries. On October 31, 1996 RUGMARK FOUNDATION opened RUGMARK BALASHRYA, its first rehabilitation centre for freed child labour at Gopiganj, District Bhadohi.

Since September 1994, when the RUGMARK initiative was launched, it has contributed considerably towards enhancing export of carpets manufactured without child labour. This study examines into details the efforts and results of the RMF initiatives. Also it will examine the extent to which RUGMARK is instrumental

In eradicating child labour in the carpet industry by providing employment to adults. It will also make a comparative study of RUGMARK and KALEEN. KALEEN label was launched by the Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) in June 1995 at Bhadohi. Its members have to pay 0.25% of the FOB value of their

exports of all types of handmade (including handtufted) woolen, silk and art-silk (synthetic) carpets, druggets, durries, etc. for child welfare fund. Its export performance has been as follows:

| Year | Target (Floor coverings) | EXPORT PERFORMANCED OF CARPETS AND OTHER WOOLENS | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Woolen | Silk | Synthetic | Total |
| 1993-94 | 1260.00 (\$400million) | 1196.85 (\$382million) | 88.90 (\$28 million) | 104.35 (\$33 million) | 1390.00 (\$443million) |
| 1995-96 | 1950.00 (590) | 1699.50 (515.00) | 118.25 (35.83) | 142.05 (43.05) | 1959.80 (593.88) |
| 1996-97 | 2160.00 (620) | | | | |

Source : CEPC

After launching KALEEN, CEPC had opened 5 schools; 2 schools under Project Mala, in Mirzapur; 2 schools under CREDA, and 1 school under Child Labour Elimination and Welfare Society.

CEC in Brief

Centre for Education and Communication is a Society registered in 1983 (Registration Number S/13682/83) under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Centre for Education and Communication is a resource centre for labour, in particular of those in the unorganised and informal sectors. It functions as a centre for workers' education and participatory labour research.

CEC creatively responded to the challenges posed by the autonomous workers' movements that emerged in the 1980s. Now, it is aware of the economy's integration into the global market and the consequent changes in the structure and nature of employment.

CEC perceives its role as to

1. critically understand the changes in the employment structure,
2. positively contribute, through its various activities, to the enhancement of dignity of labour, and towards this end,
3. evolve appropriate strategies, at national and international levels, in collaboration with all trade unions and labour organisations, labour support organisations and peoples' movements.

CEC places itself in the interface of social action and academic research, aligning on the one hand with the activist groups and the struggles of formal and informal sector workers, tribals, women, victims of development, environmental groups etc., and on the other hand with the section of academic community who prefers to constantly interact with people's organisations and movements. It is a two way process; learning from the people and contributing to the enlargement of their horizon.

