



Child Labor and Indian Carpet Industry

Ajeet Jaiswal¹, Sapna Jaiswal²

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India

² MBA, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, India

Abstract

The use of child labor in the production of hand knotted carpets in India has been widely reported and documented. An important development which has a bearing on the incidence of child labor in the carpet industry in India is that in recent years there has been an overall decline in the production and exports of hand knotted carpets in India, particularly in core carpet belt. The principal aim of the present study is to understand the current situation of the child labor problem in India's carpet industry. A total of 60 loom enterprises with 137 active looms were selected from December, 2006 to February 2007, from the Badhoi, Mirzapur and Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. As the issue of child labor is one of a very sensitive nature, the researcher had to cope with several obstacles during the fieldwork in the areas covered by the study. Out of the total 528 weavers working on 60 loom enterprises studied there are 17 'definitely children' of whom 76.47% are boys and 23.53% are girls. The figures for 'probably children' working on the looms are 46. The analysis of the workforce composition and working conditions of weavers found that children continue to be involved in significant numbers in the production of handmade carpets. Children account for 7.57% of the total workforce. Most of the children working on looms are boys (82%). Among the children working on the looms, the majority (58%) of them belong to the family labor category. The proportion of child labor to the total workforce is higher in the Persian variety of carpets than in the other varieties. Analysis of distribution of child labor in different sizes of enterprises shows that employment of child labor is greater in the larger enterprises. Findings of the present study clearly indicate that compared to the 1990s there has been a decline in the magnitude of child labor in the carpet industry; however, this decline is not to the extent of claims made by the government and industry sources. There are multiple reasons for the decline in child labor.

Keywords: Child labor; India's carpet industry; Persian variety; Weavers; Carpet workers; Working Conditions and Wages.