



Child Labor and Indian Carpet Industry

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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.

Introduction

Though the use of child labor is prevalent in many industries in India no other industry has received such widespread attention as the carpet industry. The use of child labor in the

production of hand knotted carpets in India has been widely reported and documented. The reported large scale violations of child rights have caught the attention of many around the world. Being an export oriented industry the process of production has been

subjected to close scrutiny (Mishra and Pande, 1996). Throughout the 1990s numerous reports have described large numbers of children working illegally in the carpet industry of India (1). Despite variations in the estimates as to the extent of child labor, it is generally agreed that engagement of children in the carpet industry is high (Anker et.al, 1998; Alakh et.al, 2000).

For the last fifteen years there has been a growing concern about this problem within and outside the country. A number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Indian government, NGOs, carpet industry, and International agencies like the ILO, UNICEF, and UNDP to address this problem. Under the Child Labor Act of 1986 (prohibition and regulation) the Indian government has prohibited employment of children in the carpet industry. The act has recognized the industry as a hazardous process for employing children under the age of 14 years (Bhattacharyya and Sahoo, 1996), In addition to enacting this law the government of India, following a Supreme Court directive in 1996, launched a special scheme (National Child Labor Project) to wean children away from such hazardous occupations and processes and to rehabilitate them in special schools meant for child labor. International agencies like the ILO, UNICEF and UNDP launched special

projects to assist the local NGOs in addressing the problem of child labor in carpet producing areas (Alakh et.al, 2000). Extensive media coverage of the use of child labor in the hand-knotted carpet industry along with ensuing consumer campaigns have led to a number of carpet labelling initiatives in the 1990s (2). 'Social labelling' consists of labelling carpets or companies by either embodying a guarantee to consumers that carpet has been made without using child labor or a commitment towards the elimination of the problem of child labor (Vijayagopalan, 1993). The four social labelling initiatives introduced in the 1990s were a) Rugmark, b) Kaleen c) STEP and d) Care and Fair ((Burra 1995; Anker et.al, 1998).

Following these four initiatives from various organizations (including that of the government) there have been claims in recent years, especially from the government and carpet industry, that the problem of illegal child labor in the industry has almost disappeared and it is no longer an issue of any relevance (3). In contrast to this, NGOs working on this issue, as well as the media, report that while acknowledging a small reduction in numbers, figures continue to report large scale employment of children in this industry (Mishra and Pande, 1996). They argue that the growing international media

attention and interventions by government, NGOs and other international agencies in recent years have made child labor go underground in several places (Burra 1995; Alakh et.al, 2000).

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 (Harvey et.al, 1994). Since the early 2000s, the carpet industry has entered into a new phase characterized by an overall decline in the production and exports of hand knotted carpets (Vijayagopalan, 1993). The production of hand knotted carpets is very labor intensive and time consuming (Bhattacharyya and Sahoo, 1996). The incidence of child labor has been found to be more prevalent in the production of hand knotted carpets versus other varieties of carpets (Harvey et.al, 1994). The demand for hand knotted carpets in the international market has declined due to change in consumer tastes in favour of cheaper, less durable and modern design carpets rather than more costly, long lasting and traditional design carpets (Anker et.al, 1998). As a result, the demand for Tufted and Tibetan carpets and durries, which are less labor intensive, is

steadily growing (Juyal, 1993). The principal aim of the present study is to understand the current situation of the child labor problem in India's carpet industry, specifically located in the `core carpet belt` in and around the Mirzapur-Bhodohi region in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Methodology

This study was mainly based on primary data collected from the field interviews and discussions with carpet weavers, child laborers, contractors, exporters, NGO activists, and government officials in three different areas where carpet production is concentrated. The tools used for primary data collection were semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and observations and case studies. Though carpet weaving is spread over different parts of the country, the title `carpet industry` has become synonymous with the Mirzapur-Bhadohi belt. Nearly 70% of carpets exported from India originate from this region. The so-called `carpet belt` of Uttar Pradesh is primarily comprised of three core districts (Bhadhoi, Mirzapur and Varanasi) and four adjacent districts (Allahabad, Koshambi, Jaunpur and Sonebhadra) at the periphery. In recent years there has been a shift of carpet production to some new areas in the neighbouring states of Bihar and Jharkhand. The study was conducted in two

district of Uttar Pradesh i.e. Badhoi, Mirzapur and Varanasi.

Result and Discussion:

Table No. 1. Description of Number of Carpet Weaving Villages and loom Studied

Carpet weaving areas (No. of villages studied)	Badhoi	9 (60%)
	Mirzapur	3 (20%)
	Varanasi	3 (20%)
No. of loom enterprises (with active loom)	15x4	60 (137)
Types of child workers (ILO)	Definitely children	who are below 14 years age
	Definitely adults	who are above 14 years age and
	Probably children	whose age cannot be gauged by appearance

A total of fifteen villages were studied, 9 (60%) of which were selected from the Badhoi district area and another 3 (20%) each from Mirzapur and Varanasi area. Fifty percent of the villages were chosen randomly and remaining 50% chosen purposely. In each of these villages 4 loom enterprises of different sizes (2 single loom enterprises, 1 double loom and 1 three and above looms) were randomly studied. Thus a total of 60 loom enterprises with 137 active looms were studied from December, 2006 to February 2007. 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. The researcher before collecting the data explains the motives of the research and takes the oral and written consent from the respondent. In order to determine which workers were children, researcher somewhat followed the method of observation adopted by ILO-CORT study in 1998. Researcher records their observations into three categories- 1) definitely children, 2) definitely adults and 3) probably children. The category of 'probably children' was used when an investigator could not decide whether a worker was a child or not. While estimating total number of child laborers it was decided to treat 50% of numbers in the 'probably children' labor category as child laborers.

A total sample of 60 loom enterprises with 137 active looms was studied. A total of 528 weavers were currently working on these looms. These weavers were recorded into three categories. a) Definitely children who are below 14 years age b) definitely adults who are above 14 years age and c) probably children whose age cannot be gauged by appearance.

Out of the total 528 weavers working on 60 loom enterprises studied there are 17 'definitely children' of whom 13 (76.47%) are

boys and 4 (23.53%) are girls. The figures for ‘probably children’ working on the looms is 46 of whom 38 (82.60%) are boys and 8 (17.40%) are girls. If 50% of probably child labor is included to the ‘definitely child’ labor

category then the total number of child laborers in the surveyed units is 40. Of the total of 40 children, 80% are boys and 20% are girls. Thus, children account for 7.57% of the total workforce.

Table No 2. Distribution of Carpet workers according to Area, Sex, Child labor category and percentage of Child labor to the total workforce

Area/ District	Definitely child Labor (DCL)			Probably child Labor (PCL)			Total child labor*	Total Workforce**	% of child labor to the total workforce
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
Badhoi	9	2	11	21	4	25	23.5	379	6.20
Mirzapur	3	1	4	14	2	16	12	97	12.37
Varanasi	1	1	2	3	2	5	4.5	52	8.65
Total	13	4	17	38	8	46	40	528	7.57

* Total child labor =100% DCL+50% PCL. Assuming that the chances of a probably child being a child are 50%, 50% of probably children are calculated as children.

** Total workforce = 100% adults + 100% definitely children + 100% probably children

In the three areas, where the study was carried out, the incidence of child labor is reported to be less than earlier. Both the qualitative information and the quantitative data collected indicate this. Though there is a decline in the incidence of child labor, it is not uniform in all the three regions. The Mirzapur area is reported to have had more children working on the looms. The proportion of child labor to the total workforce in Mirzapur area is 12.37% followed by the Varanasi area with 8.67% and Badhoi area with 6.20%.

Out of a total of 36 loom enterprises in the Badhoi area, there are 12 looms with 25 children working on the looms. Out of the 12 loom enterprises in the Mirzapur area, 8 enterprises have 16 children engaged on

looms. In the Varanasi area, out of the 12 loom enterprises in 3 enterprises, 5 children were found working.

Badhoi and Mirzapur districts in eastern Uttar Pradesh have become synonymous with carpet production and employment of children. Therefore, various organizations working against child labor in the carpet industry concentrated their efforts in this area. Even law enforcing agencies particularly targeted this area. The qualitative information from the 9 villages in the core area (Badhoi and Mirzapur) where the survey was carried out, and the interaction with NGOs, Labor department and education department, indicate that there has been a significant decline in the number of child laborers.

Though there are variations between the claims of the government, Industry, NGOs and trade unions, there is a common acceptance in respect to the overall decline in the incidence of child labor. Most of the loom owners said they are more worried about the legal course of action if children are engaged on their looms. In certain pockets where the local NGOs and the rehabilitation schemes of the government are effective a positive change is evolving in the attitudes of the communities and parents about their children.

In the extension area the situation is a bit different. The law enforcing agencies seem to be of little help here. The researchers came across many people in the core area (Badhoi and Mirzapur) who reported facing the wrath of these agencies. In the extension area like Varanasi, however, few people spoke about this. The presence of NGOs is also very limited here. In the new area, the situation is similar to that of the core area. The department threatened that severe penalties would be imposed on the loom owners if they were to be found employing children.

Table No 3. Distribution of Subjects according to Area and Profile of Child Labor

Area/ District	Family labor (%)	Hired Labor (%)	
		Local	Migrant
Badhoi	56.72	32.09	11.19
Mirzapur	56.16	36.99	6.85
Varanasi	73.68	26.32	0.00
Total	57.96	33.19	8.85

Children working in carpet looms tend to fall into 1 of 3 main forms of labor: family labor, local hired labor or migrant hired labor. Among the children working on the looms the majority (58%) of them belong to the family labor category. Hired labor, both local and migrant, account for 42% (33.19% are local and 8.85% are migrants). The proportion of family labor is higher in the

Varanasi area (73.7%). It is 56.7% in Badhoi and 56.2% in Mirzapur area. In the hired labor category, local labor is more than the migrant labor. Local hired labor accounts for 79% of the total hired labor. Migrant labor is more prevalent in the Badhoi area. Migration takes place from Bihar and Jharkhand areas only. As a result, no migrant laborers are reported as originating from the new area.

Table No 4. Distribution of Child labor according to Size, Enterprises, Profile and Types of Carpets.

Size	% looms having one or more child labor		% of Children to the total Workforce
Enterprises with one loom	18		6.21
Enterprises with two loom	47		6.92
Enterprises with three or more than three loom	76		7.57
Profile of child labor by size			
	Family Labor (%)	Local hired Labor (%)	Migrant labor (%)
Enterprises with one loom	83.33	16.67	0.00
Enterprises with two loom	57.14	32.65	10.20
Enterprises with three or more than three loom	50.37	38.52	11.11
Total	57.96	33.19	8.85
Incidence of child labor in different types of carpet making			
Type of carpet	Total Child Labor	Total Workforce	% of Child Labor
Persian	31	327	9.48
Non Persian	9	201	4.48
Total	40	528	7.57
Profile of child labor by carpet variety (Proportion)			
	Family Labor	Local hired Labor	Migrant labor
Persian	67.09	27.22	5.70
Non Persian	40.0	45.7	14.29
Total	57.96	33.19	8.85

Analysis of the distribution of child labor in different sized enterprises shows that the employment of children tends to increase as the size of the enterprise increases. A total 60 enterprises studied, 33 (55%) are single loom enterprises, 15 (25%) enterprises have two looms and 12 (20%) enterprises have three or more looms.

Of the total enterprises 38% of them have one or more children working on the looms. Eighteen percent fall into the single loom category while 47% fall into the two looms category. In the category of three or more looms, 76% employ children. With regard to the proportion of child labor to the total workforce, it is observed that larger enterprises have a higher proportion of

children in their workforce versus smaller enterprises. While enterprises with three or

more looms have 7.57% of their workforce employed as children, the single loom and two loom enterprises have 6.21% and 6.92% respectively.

It has been observed that there is a higher rate of hired child labor in larger enterprises. While in the category of three or more loom enterprises hired child labor constituted 50%, in single and double loom enterprises their proportion is 16.67% and 42.86% respectively. Migrant labor constituted 10.2% in the double looms category and 11.11% in enterprises with three or more looms. In single loom enterprises no migrant labor was found.

The techniques used to make the carpets in this region can be broadly categorized into two types: hand knotted Persian, and non-Persian varieties. Non-Persian varieties include a) hand tufted Carpet (b) Tibetan/Nepalese varieties and (c) durries.

Traditionally, hand knotted Persian varieties

are produced on a large scale. Demand for this variety is higher as well. Therefore, there are more looms that weave the hand-knotted Persian design. More than sixty percent of the looms studied produce Persian styles of carpets. Production of the hand-knotted Persian carpets is very labor-intensive and time-consuming. There is also a higher incidence of child labor in the production of these carpets. As if now the demand for hand-knotted Persian carpets is steadily declining while the demand for other varieties is growing.

The proportion of child labor to the total workforce is higher for the Persian variety than in the other varieties. While the proportion of child labor in the Persian variety accounts for 9.48%, the non-Persian varieties account for 4.48%. Hired child labor has a higher rate in Persian than in non-Persian varieties.

Working Conditions and Wages

Weaving is performed by sitting on a wooden plank in a cramped position. The work is repetitive in nature, demanding intense hand-eye coordination. Children working in the carpet industry, especially

engaged in the weaving, are vulnerable to many health problems. Working on the looms for long hours is likely to affect their eye sight. The inhalation of wool causes respiratory problems and other ailments such as swelling of the lower limbs and pain in the joints and spine. These ailments are all common to these children (Alakh et.al, 2000).

The looms are predominantly located in the owner's house. Should an enterprise have one or two looms, they are typically located in the owner's house (thatched huts). The children not only live in these congested houses, they also carry out their weaving activities. Looms are installed in the small, cramped rooms or in the veranda, without proper ventilation. Weavers sit on a plank in a pit behind the loom about a foot deep. In larger enterprises with more looms, the premises are a bit larger with better ventilation.

In the 60 enterprises studied in the core carpet manufacturing area of Uttar Pradesh, conditions in the establishments (such as the sitting arrangement, lighting and ventilation) were recorded.

Table No 5. Distribution of Size of the Enterprises according to Facilities at worksite like Status of Ventilation, Lighting, Seat arrangement and Structure

Size (%)	Ventilation (%)	Lighting (%)	Seat arrangement (%)	Structure (%)
Enterprises with one loom: 33	24(66.67)	25 (62.5)	26 (61.91)	19 (67.86)

(55.0)				
Enterprises with two loom: 15(25.0)	9(25.0)	11 (27.5)	10 (23.81)	7 (25.0)
Enterprises with three or more than three loom : 12(20.0)	3(8.33)	4 (10.0)	6 (14.28)	2 (7.14)
Total 60 (100)	36 (60.0)	40(66.67)	42(70.0)	28(46.66)

Above table shows that out of 60 enterprises surveyed 36 enterprises (60%) did not have sufficient ventilation, 40 (66.67%) did not have sufficient lighting and 42 (70%) were lacking proper seating arrangements. Enterprises with sufficient lighting, ventilation and proper seating arrangement were less than 20%. The majority of the structures were thatched houses 46%, 27% each of the enterprises were katchas and pucca structures. For obvious reasons both the conditions and structures of the single and double loom enterprises are haphazard.

The growing worldwide media attention along with interventions by government, NGOs and other international agencies in recent years has caused many to attempt to hide the truth about child labor. In an attempt to hide child labor weavers, many places are shifting their looms to inside the house. As most of the looms are situated in small, thatched houses with little or no ventilation, the current attention has led many employers to shift production from

outside of the house to the inside. In effect,

working conditions become even more harmful to the workers.

Payment in advance is a common tactic used in recruiting labor, whether it is children or adults. Children found working in the carpet looms fall into 3 types of labor: family labor, local hired labor or migrant hired labor. Local children are often recruited from individuals they know. Until the 1990s, there was a significant amount of migrant children working on the looms. Most of these children were recruited from the neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. The recruitment of these children used to take place through these agents. Children recruited through agents are usually paid an advance sum of Rs. 600 – 2000 and they are required to work until the advanced amount was repaid. The amount of time it takes to repay the loan can take anywhere from one to five years based on the amount paid in advance. In order to make up for the sum taken in advance, the amount is deducted from their wages.

Accurate calculation of per day wage earnings is difficult in the case of home-based loom workers. With some exceptions wages are generally based on a piece rate basis, and this

also depends upon the quality of the carpet woven. Normally a loom owner is given some advance and full payment is made when the carpet weaving is complete.

The period for weaving a carpet varies from one to six months, depending upon the size and quality of the carpets. In the case of any defect in carpet weaving (as per the given design), there is invariably a deduction from the wages. In such a system it is difficult to arrive at a precise figure for a worker's earnings per day, particularly in the case of home-based loom workers. For some workers weaving is not their only occupation; they are engaged in other activities such as agricultural operations. During the peak agricultural season they work only part of the day on looms while the rest is spent working on their farms.

Advances are a common feature in the carpet industry. While the company lends advance to the contractor/master weaver, it passes down to the weaver. No interest is paid on the advance lent. Every weaver, however, is told that if he doesn't take the advances they get more wages. This difference would be around 5% or Rs. 50 to 100 per yard. The amounts taken in advanced also depend upon the size and design of the carpet to be woven which can range between Rs. 500 to 10,000. Once a weaver takes the advance he would be bound

to work for/under the same master/contractor until the loan is repaid. Wages are paid after a week to 15 days from the date of executing the order. A penalty is imposed on the weaver and cut from his/her wages in case there are any defects in the weaving or delay in executing the order.

The decline in the industry has had adverse effects on workers' wages. Even though there has been a marginal increase in the wages there has been no change in their real wages. Because of acute competition and fall in profits, companies are putting more controls on quality aspects. As a result, they are imposing cuts in the wages for minor defects to increase their profit margin. Many weavers feel that they are being under paid. Their chief complaint is that, even for minor defects, they are being fined huge sums.

Researchers asked an exporter about the wages cuts of the workers. He explained that, "In the absence of sufficient orders and acute competition, quality has become prime concern for everyone which has resulted in a cut in wages. Whereas weavers and trade union leaders whom we met complained that contractors are trying to maximize their benefits within the existing business and as a result they are resorting to this kind of practices."

Table No 6. Comparison of the Present Study Findings with Earlier Studies

Source and Year of study	Estimates total number / proportion of child	Other findings
Juyal (1993)	350,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.92 children per loom • Ratio of adult worker to child worker is 1:2.3
Harvey and Riggin 1994	130,000	
NCAER 1992	8% of the total workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the total children employed • 55% are family labor and 45% are hired labor
Neera Burra 1995	150,000	
ILO- CORT 1993	130,000 (22% of total workforce)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment of child labor is more in the larger enterprises • 68% hired labor and 32% are family labor
CEPC-AICMA 1998	0.93% of the total workforce	
Institute for Human Development 2000	19.2%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls account for 7.5% of total child labor • Incidence of child labor is low in core carpet belt compared to other areas of carpet production • Family labor 77.3% and hired
Present study 2009	7.13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incidence of child labor is low in core carpet belt compared to other areas of carpet production • 18% are girls. • 58% family labor , 42% hired labor • Incidence of hired labor is on decline • Incidence of child labor is more in looms making Persian type carpets • Decline in the production and exports of hand knotted carpets • Employment of child labor is more in the larger enterprises

The above table presents a comparison of findings of the present study with earlier studies done in 1990s with regard to the magnitude of child labor and workforce composition in the carpet industry. Barring

the NCAER study (1992) and the CEPC study

(1998) all of the other studies carried out in the 1990s pointed out that there were more children working on the looms than believed. While Juyal's study in the early 1990s estimated the total number of children to be 350,000, the ILO-CORT study conducted in 1993 estimated this number as 130,000.

Due to variations in conceptual and methodological approaches adopted by

different studies, comparisons between them are difficult. The methodology adopted by the present study is somewhat similar to the study conducted by ILO-CORT in 1993. The ILO-CORT study reflects the situation of child labor in the industry in the early 1990s (Mishra and Pande, 1996).

A comparison of workforce composition and magnitude of child labor between these studies indicates that since the early 1990s there has been a decline in the incidence of child labor in the carpet industry. The ILO-CORT study estimates that the proportion of child labor to the total workforce as 22% and

the present study estimates it at 7.13%. The proportion of hired labor among child workers has also declined during this period. The ILO-CORT study estimated the proportion of hired labor at 68% while the present study estimates it at 42%.

The present study falls in line with ILO-CORT study in respect to other findings. It was found that the incidence of child and hired child labor was higher in larger loom enterprises compared to the smaller ones in which children did not possess any special skills that adults did not have as well in making carpets.

Table No 7. A Comparison of Incidence of Child labor between ILO-CORT and the Present study

Loom Size	ILO-CORT study (1993)	Present study
Enterprises with one loom: 33 (55.0)	17.2	6.21
Enterprises with two loom: 15(25.0)	25.2	6.92
Enterprises with three or more than three loom : 12(20.0)	27.1	7.57
Total 60 (100)	21.7	7.57

The above table shows the comparison of incidence of child labor between ILO-CORT and the Present study in different sizes of loom enterprises. The ILO-CORT study estimated the proportion of child labor in the single loom category as 17.2% whereas this percentage is 27.1% in the three or more loom category. The present study also makes a

similar observation that incidence of child labor is higher in larger enterprises (6.21% in the single loom category versus 7.57% in three or more loom category).

Reasons for decline of child labor

Findings of the present study clearly indicate that compared to the 1990s there was a decline in the magnitude of child labor in the carpet industry. There are a few reasons for

the decline of child labor. The cumulative impact of various positive interventions by the government, NGOs, International agencies, social labelling initiatives and the carpet industry have all contributed to the decrease in child labor. In addition to these positive interventions, the recent developments in the carpet industry which led to a decline in the overall production and export of hand knotted carpets have also contributed to the reduction in the numbers (Alakh et.al, 2000).

In recent years there has been an overall decline in the production and export of hand knotted carpets in India, particularly in the core carpet belt. The production of hand knotted carpets is very labor intensive and requires a large amount of time. The incidence of child labor has been seen more in the production of hand knotted carpets than any other variety. The international demand for hand knotted carpets has declined due to changes in consumer tastes which now look to favour cheaper, less durable and more modern design carpets. As a result, the demand for tufted and Tibetan carpets and durries, which are less labor intensive, are on the rise. This development has partly contributed to the reduction of child labor in the carpet industry (Bhattacharyya and Sahoo, 1996).

The Child Labor Act of 1986 (prohibition and regulation) introduced by the government

prohibits the employment of children in the carpet industry. In addition to enacting this law the government of India, following a Supreme Court directive in 1996, has launched a scheme (National Child Labor Project) to wean children away from hazardous occupations and processes and to rehabilitate them in special schools meant for child laborers (Mishra and Pande, 1996).

In addition to the measures taken above, there was also an introduction of a mid-day meal scheme in elementary schools and a launching of a programme by the National Child Labor Programme aimed at improving school conditions by providing more schools and teachers under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (Juyal, 1993). This helped create an environment that encouraged several parents in the area to send their children to school. In addition to government intervention, efforts initiated by several NGOs also helped to reduce the incidence of child labor in the carpet industry. Even today there is a strong presence of NGOs working on the child labor issue in the carpet-producing regions. Their approaches usually focus on education and welfare measures. Among the NGOs, Project Mala and the Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) deserve special mention. The 'Bal Adhikar

Pariyojana' (Child Rights Project), launched in 1997 and which operates in the two districts of Bhadohi and Mirzapur in the core carpet belt, adopted a different strategy based on networking, economic empowerment of women, advocacy and capacity building.

Responses from the participants show that 20-30% of the children engaged in the looms prior to the study. Researcher asked the respondents what prompted them to stop engaging children. Seventy percent of the respondents stated that government pressure and NGO motivation stopped them from engaging children. At the same time, approximately 30% of the people stated it was because of the pressure from the industry (Alakh et.al, 2000).

In order to address the issue of child labor in carpet industry, the concept of 'social labelling' was introduced in the 1990s. The concept was mainly an outcome of heightened awareness about child labor and international pressures to curb its use. Labeling initiatives aimed at improving the living and working conditions of the weaving community by exerting pressure on the exporters/suppliers to enforce better working conditions including prohibiting child labor in the production of carpets. 'Social labelling' consists of

labelling carpets or companies, either by embodying a guarantee to consumers that carpet has been made without child labor or a commitment towards the elimination of the problem. The four existing social labelling initiatives are a) Rugmark b) Kaleen c) STEP and d) Care and Fair (Bhattacharyya and Sahoo, 1996). These labeling programmes show that 70% of respondents differ not only in their mechanisms and the approaches adopted but also in their stated objectives. Rugmark and Kaleen labels are affixed to individual carpets, while STEP and Care & Fair are company certification programmes. Except for Care & Fair, the other three labeling initiatives operate with inspection and monitoring mechanisms of one kind or another¹⁵.

Of the total 60 loom enterprises studied as part of the present study, more than 20 of them have been found as having one or more children engaged in carpet production. Out of 24 enterprises engaging child labor, researcher could able to acquire the supply chain details of names of sub contractors, contractors, exporters for whom the carpets are made for 18 enterprises. These enterprises are producing carpets for 8 small and big export companies in India. Most of these Indian exporters have their own share of exports to US market and all the leading US importers

procure carpets from these exporters.

Conclusion

Since the early 2000s the carpet industry has entered into a new phase which was characterized by overall decline in the production and exports of hand knotted carpets. The incidence of child labor can be seen more in the production of hand knotted carpets than any other variety. The demand for hand knotted carpets in the international market has declined due to changes in consumer tastes in favor of cheaper, less durable and modern design carpets, rather than more costly, longer lasting and traditional design carpets.

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. The cumulative impact of various positive interventions by the government, NGOs, International agencies, Social labeling initiatives and the carpet industry have all contributed to the reduction of child labor in this industry

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