

THE HUMANITARIAN MAGAZINE

NEED™

BRINGING AID TO
THE PEOPLE OF DARFUR

13-YEAR-OLD HUMANITARIAN

REDUCE CHILD LABOR – BUY A RUG

BECOME A PHILANTHROPIST WITH \$3

CORPORATIONS STEP UP



WE ARE NOT OUT TO
SAVE THE WORLD,
BUT TO TELL THE STORIES
OF THOSE WHO ARE.

WORK | SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE TEXTILES

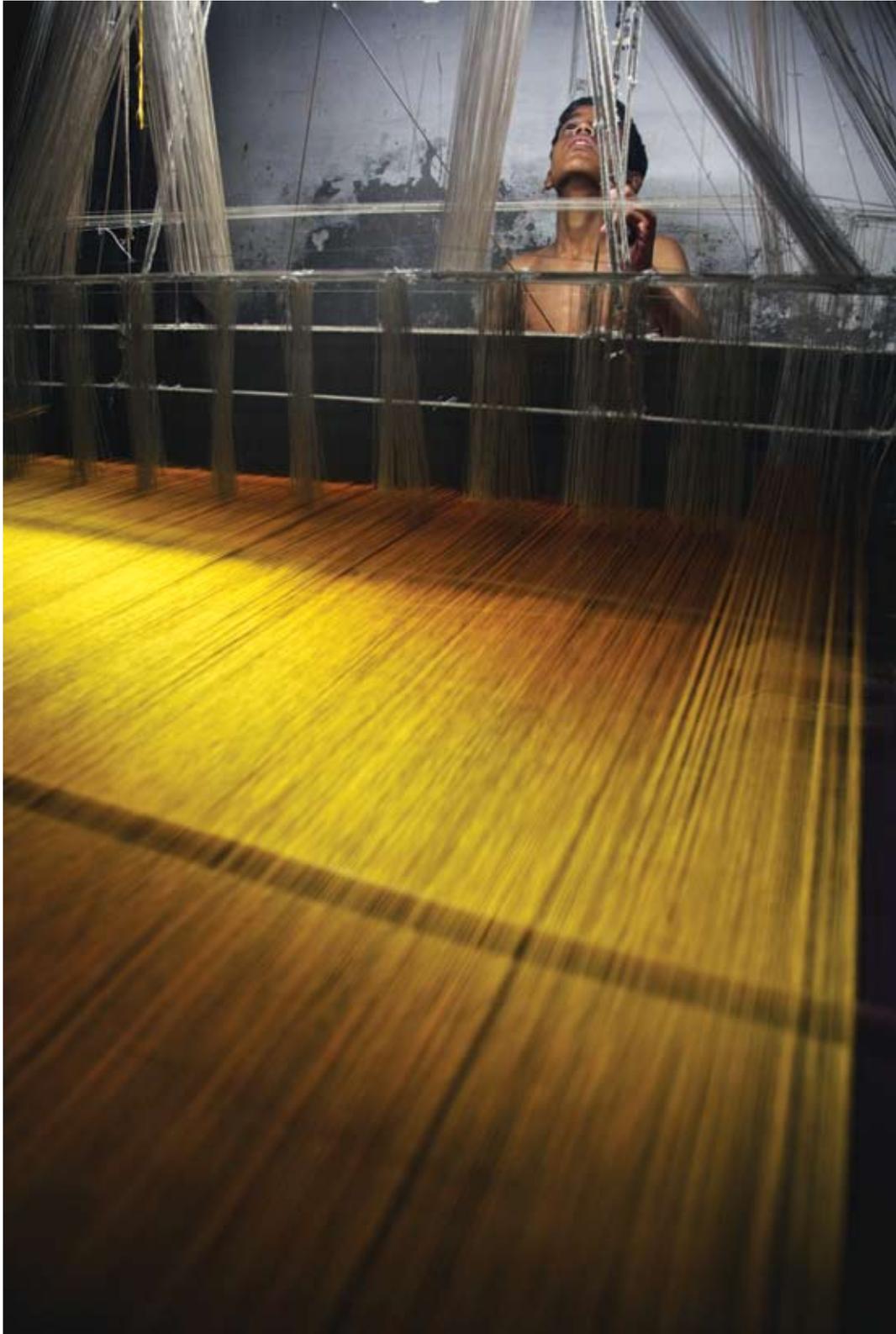
WORK | SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE TEXTILES

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THE NAMES OF FORMER CHILD LABORERS
IN THIS STORY HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

At what point does a child lose the ability to smile, laugh or dream? For child laborers in the carpet-weaving sectors of Nepal, their playful spirits are stifled when their hands become commodities. Factory owners jeopardize the health and welfare of these young “apprentices” for a selfish profit when children as young as 4 are enslaved at the loom.



PHOTOGRAPHER YAN SEILER TOOK THIS PHOTO OF A CHILD LABORER AT THE LOOM IN INDIA PRIOR TO DOCUMENTING THIS STORY. WHILE PHOTOGRAPHING RUG-MAKING FACTORIES IN NEPAL FOR NEED MAGAZINE, HE WITNESSED NO CHILD LABOR.

Thanks to RugMark, an international nonprofit devoted to eliminating child labor in the handmade carpet industry, all hope is not lost. Their comprehensive approach gives rescued children a new lease on life. RugMark's efforts call for the cooperation of consumers, manufacturers, distributors and adult workers alike to redefine a major industry in Nepal.

With a well-crafted system, RugMark has conducted over 34,000 factory inspections since December 1996. Their mission states, "If enough people demand certified child-labor-free rugs, manufacturers will only employ skilled, adult artisans, and the exploitation of children in the carpet industry will come to an end." Physically removing children from forced labor is the main responsibility of RugMark inspectors. This task requires constant monitoring of cooperating factories and an ambitious pursuit of undiscovered facilities.

Once a factory meets child-labor-free standards, it is awarded certification and may place RugMark's smiling logo on the back of its rugs. RugMark inspectors hold factories that are registered as child-labor-free accountable through unannounced inspections and associated licensing fees. Consumers can be assured of a rug's socially responsible construction by tracking each unique code back to the loom on which it was made.





SARASHWOTI MUKTAN, 26, HAS BEEN WORKING IN A CHILD-LABOR-FREE FACTORY FOR FIVE MONTHS AND SAYS THE CONDITIONS ARE MUCH BETTER THAN THE PREVIOUS FACTORY SHE WORKED IN.



BARATI (RIGHT) AND HIS FRIENDS PLAY A BOARD GAME AT THE RUGMARK REHABILITATION CENTER.

BARATI'S STORY

Barati's rural farming family of seven simply could not afford to stay together. At age 12, his family sent him to work for a broker in a carpet factory where each day bled into the next. Despite the broker's attempts to hide him from RugMark inspectors, Barati was rescued from the loom on March 7, 2007. Now 13, he wants to become a social worker like RugMark inspectors. His hopes for the future reflect the impact that RugMark inspectors make on the lives of former child laborers.

In impoverished Nepal, an education is a privilege that few can afford, and Barati knows from experience that it is certainly nothing to take for granted. Nina Smith, executive director of RugMark USA, explains, "If you have child labor, you are going to have poverty. You are going to have [a] lack of education, and it's going to perpetuate a cycle of poverty. Any child that is given the chance to be educated, instead of work, can succeed." Smith adds, "It doesn't matter if they come from a poor region of the world or from a poor family."



THE BOYS AT THE REHABILITATION CENTER EAT A NUTRITIOUS MEAL.

"If you have child labor, you are going to have poverty. You are going to have [a] lack of education, and it's going to perpetuate a cycle of poverty."



DEVI BASHYALIS (RIGHT), 38, HAS BEEN WORKING IN THE CARPET INDUSTRY FOR 15 YEARS. AFTER HEARING GOOD REPORTS ABOUT A FACTORY IN HER AREA, SHE APPLIED FOR A JOB THERE AND HAS BEEN WORKING IN A CHILD-LABOR-FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR TWO YEARS.

NARAYAN'S STORY

Narayan came from an impoverished farming family in rural Nepal. One day a man came to his village, offering him work in Kathmandu. Narayan soon found himself confined to the loom. Conditions were poor; he worked day and night, was nearly starved and regularly beaten. After three years, he had only earned the equivalent of \$45 USD. RugMark saved 12-year-old Narayan and enrolled him in school. He now hopes to become a social worker.

Under the pressures of poverty, any number of hardships can land a child in front of a loom. Whether a child is forced or sold into slavery, the daily abuses endured fall nothing short of devastating. “The conditions of

the carpet industry [in] Nepal can be ... deplorable,” says Stephanie Odegard, one of the directors of the RugMark Foundation. Long hours spent focusing on a poorly lit loom can cause vision impairments. Tight quarters force poor posture that may eventually lead to spinal deformities. Even a breath of air comes at a cost to one’s health – the inhalation of wool fibers results in serious respiratory problems. Children are fed meager meals in unsanitary quarters, leaving them malnourished and susceptible to tuberculosis and other diseases. The children cannot escape the habitual scolding and abuse they receive from factory owners. In fact, “Carpet work is actually considered one of the worst forms of child labor,” confirms Smith.



PADAM LAMA, 28, HAS BEEN DYEING WOOL TO BE USED IN MAKING RUGS FOR NINE YEARS.



CHILDREN ATTEND THE RUGMARK SCHOOL WHILE THEIR PARENTS WORK IN THE CARPET FACTORY.



PHULMAYA LAMA (FOREGROUND), 29, HAS BEEN WORKING IN A CHILD-LABOR-FREE FACTORY FOR TWO YEARS. RATHER THAN WORKING BESIDE HER, LAMA'S CHILD IS CARED FOR IN THE FACTORY'S DAY CARE CENTER.



CHILDREN ARE ABLE TO PLAY IN THE FACTORY'S ON-SITE, DAY CARE CENTER.



KANTI DREAMS OF BECOMING A TEACHER WHEN SHE GROWS UP.

KANTI'S STORY

Kanti came from a violent family. Her parents sent Kanti and her sister to work in a carpet factory when she was 11. The two lived in what Kanti could only describe as a small, dirty room. Her routine started each day at 5 a.m. when she began work on an empty stomach. At 10 a.m., she could return to her sleeping quarters for no longer than 30 minutes to consume a small bowl of rice and curry. Then she was expected to return to her duties of carpet weaving until late into the evening. If she was efficient, she could return to her room by 10 p.m. with another bowl of rice and curry to suppress her hunger for the night. Kanti worked six days a week, earning the equivalent of

Kanti worked six days a week, earning the equivalent of \$8 USD per month.

\$8 USD per month. She constantly feared the scolding she received for not weaving fast enough. Hope for Kanti's future began when she was saved from the factory during a routine inspection held by RugMark. She was then enrolled in a RugMark rehabilitation center where she is pursuing an education in a safe environment.

KHADKA'S STORY

Khadka, now 15, went to work in a carpet factory to support his mother and sister. He was physically and psychologically abused by the factory owner. In January 2003, RugMark rescued Khadka after three months of illegal child labor. He said, "The teachers and caretakers [at the RugMark rehabilitation center] love me as my mother. I am extremely indebted to the RugMark Foundation for its kind and protective support in my dismal days."

Once rescued, all child laborers suffer from trauma they must overcome. Therefore, RugMark rehabilitation centers are equipped to provide psychological support. The centers also offer regular meals, education facilities and playgrounds for some much needed fun. RugMark staff members work to regain the children's trust in adults and encourage them to rediscover their childhood.



A RUGMARK TEACHER OBSERVES A FORMER CHILD LABORER WRITING ON THE CHALKBOARD.



SHITAL KHANAL (FOREGROUND), 50, HAS BEEN WORKING IN THIS RUGMARK-CERTIFIED FACTORY FOR THREE YEARS.





DHAN MAYA TAMANG WEARS A MASK TO PREVENT INHALING THE CARPET FIBERS.



KUMARI LAMA (RIGHT) HAS WORKED IN THE FACTORY FOR A YEAR WITH HER HUSBAND.



TSHERING, A FORMER CHILD LABORER, RECEIVED TRAINING TO BECOME A MECHANIC THROUGH RUGMARK'S VOCATIONAL PROGRAM.

TSHERING'S STORY

Tshering, now 17, was rescued in October 2003. He took full advantage of the benefits that RugMark has to offer former child laborers. After completing mechanic training, RugMark found him a job in a motorcycle workshop. Before his rescue, Tshering was uneducated with little prospect of a hopeful future. Now, he strives to provide for his family as a master mechanic. He says that education allows former child laborers the ability to have a brighter future.

Through the support of consumers, RugMark's mission to end child labor in Nepal, India and Pakistan will succeed. Select US companies import 100 percent of their carpets from RugMark-certified factories, providing a socially responsible option for interior design. Through the sale of each certified carpet, a portion is invested into RugMark programs.

As the consumer demand for RugMark certification grows, so does the promise of a hopeful Nepalese generation.

RugMark is winning the battle to end child labor in Nepal; it currently inspects 506 manufacturers, representing 70 percent of Nepal's carpet exports. As the consumer demand for RugMark certification grows, so does the promise of a hopeful Nepalese generation. By bringing a sense of accountability into the business equation, each purchase of a RugMark-certified, hand-woven rug keeps a handful of children off the loom and in the classroom. N-ED

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BARATI PLAYS WITH HIS FRIENDS ON THE RUGMARK PLAYGROUND.