

Faces of Freedom

VISIONS OF HOPE FOR CHILD LABORERS

Exhibition Press Kit



Introduction

The beauty of a handmade carpet is inextricably linked to the people who make it. Yet today approximately 250,000 children weave the rugs that adorn North American and European homes. GoodWeave offers hope to these children. For over a decade GoodWeave's child-labor-free certification has made a meaningful difference in South Asian weaving communities while transforming the carpet industry.

Faces of Freedom offers a look into the heart of that transformation. This traveling photo exhibition, part of GoodWeave's campaign to end child labor, takes you behind the looms and inside the lives of the carpet weavers of South Asia. The 50 black and white and color photographs that make up the exhibition were taken by documentary photographer, filmmaker and human rights educator U. Roberto Romano during visits to India, Nepal and Pakistan from 1996 through 2007.

As viewers journey through the exhibition, they will learn about the ancient craft of carpet weaving—the skill, art and tradition involved in each hand woven carpet. They will also come face to face with grim images of weavers, too young to be at the looms, laboring in poor conditions where childhoods remain incomplete.

For many of these children, GoodWeave-funded schools and centers provided their first opportunity to be in a classroom or playground. Man Maya's smiling face is a testament to the power of our choices; a few years ago she was working long hours weaving carpets after she became homeless as a result of her father's alcoholism. At that time Man Maya did not dream of a different life—she simply endured the hardships. Though illiterate at the time of her rescue, she completed the seventh grade, enrolled in a vocational training and job placement program, went on to work as a seamstress in her home town. Through the commitment of retailers, importers, designers and consumers who produce and purchase GoodWeave certified rugs, her future is now promising.

A banner year in the movement to end child labor, 2009 marked the 10th anniversary of the International Labor Organization's passage of Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labor. Today, 173 countries have signed ILO Convention 182. In conjunction with the exhibition's national co-sponsor, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, *Faces of Freedom* is being hosted in venues across North America to herald the progress that has been made in the fight against child labor worldwide. Venues include UNICEF House in New York City, Miami International Airport, the Children's Theater of Minneapolis, and the Senate Russell Rotunda in Washington, D.C.

The full collection of images and tour schedule is available online at FacesofFreedom.GoodWeave.org. Some sample images and captions can be found in this press kit, followed by stories of some of the children the GoodWeave program has saved from the looms; bios of spokespeople available for interview; facts and figures about child labor in the rug industry; and more

“Over the past 10 years I have watched GoodWeave take a lead role in the rescue and rehabilitation of child slaves and laborers in the carpet industry. It has grown into a trusted organization that continues to expand its reach and vision, all the while educating consumers that they can be good global citizens and make a difference where it is needed most. Many of the images here are grim reminders that children are still exploited in the netherworld of the global economy, but most show us that there is always hope when they are given a chance, and this is how it should be.”

– U Roberto Romano, Photographer

Sample Images

SECTION ONE: CHILD LABOR



At a loom north of Lahore, Pakistan, girls are forced to work 12 hours a day, sometimes seven days a week. In Pakistan a quarter of all carpet weavers are girls under the age of 15. (Punjab, Pakistan, 2000)

SECTION TWO: CARPET MANUFACTURING AND INSPECTION PROCESS



The technique of spinning wool by hand – and sometimes foot – is thousands of years old. The skill and sensitivity of the spinner's hands shapes the yarn. Handspun wool exposes more of the wool to dye and is more luxurious to the touch. (Kathmandu, 2000)

SECTION THREE: RESCUE AND REHABILITATION



Playful boys at a GoodWeave daycare center. Daycare centers not only help relieve weavers from the burden of child care, they also help motivate parents to enroll their kids in school. (Kathmandu, Nepal, 2000)

Sample Children's Stories



Raj Kumar (right) Orphaned at the age of 10, Raj Kumar was forced to endure long hours at a Kathmandu carpet factory. Rescued two years later, Raj was sent to study at a GoodWeave rehabilitation center. He returned to his village once he reached the legal working age. (Kathmandu, 2000)

Uma Sherpa (left) Born into a family too poor to afford school fees, Uma dropped out of the second grade in 1999. GoodWeave inspectors identified her as at risk for entering the work force and facilitated her long-term educational scholarship. Today 16-year-old Uma is in the 10th grade. (Kathmandu, 2000)



Sunita Jimba Out of economic desperation, Sunita's family sold her to a *thekedar* (broker) for the equivalent of \$2.50. She was made to work 18 hours a day as a carpet weaver and domestic servant to pay off the "loan." GoodWeave inspectors rescued her in 2005; the student now dreams of teaching Nepali and English. (Kathmandu, 2007)



Note to online media: Embed our interactive *Faces of Freedom* Preview on your website. This portal to the online exhibition allows visitors to your site to view select exhibition images. We can provide step-by-step instructions and technical assistance.

Please contact April Thompson, Director of Marketing and Communications, at 202-234-9050 or via email at april@GoodWeave.org to request high-resolution photos for publication.

Expert Spokespersons

Nina Smith is the **executive director of GoodWeave USA**, having launched GoodWeave's U.S. initiative in 1999. Nina was the executive director of The Crafts Center from 1995 to 1999, a nonprofit organization providing marketing and technical assistance to indigenous artisans around the world. As president of the Fair Trade Federation (FTF), Nina launched FTF's first consumer education campaign. Nina's overseas experience includes a crafts export consultancy to the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala, India, where she oversaw the development of new market-driven product lines, quality control mechanisms and artisan training programs.

U. Roberto Romano is an award-winning **human rights educator, filmmaker and photographer** who began his activism on child labor in 1995 when he travelled to Pakistan to film a story of the murder of Iqbal Masih, child carpet slave turned activist. Since then, Romano has traveled extensively to document the many manifestations of child labor around the world. In addition to GoodWeave, Romano has worked with numerous human rights organizations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, The International Labor Organization, and Antislavery International.

Caryl M. Stern, a long time child advocate and civil rights activist, is the **President and CEO of the U.S. Fund for UNICEF**. Prior to joining the U.S. Fund, Ms. Stern served as the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Associate National Director for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). She currently serves on the Boards of the WE ARE FAMILY Foundation and the Martin Luther King Memorial Project Foundation. Ms. Stern is the co-author of two books on child development and numerous journal articles. Married, with three sons, she was once named as "*One of 25 Moms We Love*" by *Working Mother Magazine*.

Stephanie Odegard is the **Founder and President of Odegard**, which has produced and imported collections of uniquely designed carpets from Nepal since 1987. Odegard has been GoodWeave USA's largest industry contributor since 1997 and longest standing member in the US. Previously, Stephanie spent 12 years abroad working for institutions such as the World Bank, the U.S. Peace Corps, the United Nations and the governments of Jamaica and Nepal as a marketing consultant for exports from small-scale industry. Stephanie was a founding board member of GoodWeave USA.

Interviews with other key individuals may be available upon request, including Kailash Satyarthi, chairman of the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude and the original founder of RugMark, the predecessor of GoodWeave.

Interviews can also be arranged with any of GoodWeave's industry members, located throughout the U.S. and Canada. Please see http://www.GoodWeave.org/spotlight_list.php for vignettes about each industry partner. We can also put you in touch with customers who have made the decision to purchase a GoodWeave rug.

Please contact April Thompson at 202-234-9050 or via email at april@GoodWeave.org to schedule an interview or for more information.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is *Faces of Freedom*?

- This exhibition tells a powerful story, one that begins with exploitation and ends with empowerment. Through the GoodWeave certification program and the commitment of businesses and consumers, children in South Asia are going to school instead of laboring on the looms. The exhibition aims to raise awareness about the grim reality of child labor and the simple acts we can all take to end it. The complete exhibition and tour schedule is available at facesoffreedom.goodweave.org.
- The U.S. Fund for UNICEF, the United States national committee that supports UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), is the sole national partner of Faces of Freedom. The U.S. Fund and UNICEF have supported GoodWeave's child rescue and rehabilitation work since 1994. For more than 60 years, UNICEF has been the world's leading international children's organization, working in over 150 countries to address the ongoing problems that contribute to child mortality. For more information about UNICEF, please visit www.unicefusa.org.

What is the scope of the problem of child labor in South Asia's rug industry?

- Despite laws prohibiting child labor in the rug industry in Nepal, India and Pakistan, the practice is rampant. An estimated 250,000 children in South Asia – some as young as 4 years old – work in the handmade carpet industry under inhumane conditions that can cause respiratory illness and spinal deformities, among other long-term effects.
- Many child weavers are victims of debt bondage, forced to work off debt incurred by their parents. Children are charged for shelter and food, held responsible for any imperfections in the carpets they weave and often spend their lifetime repaying debts worth just a few dollars.
- Rugs are among South Asia's top export products and the industry is a major employer of the poor. The prevalence of child labor depreciates adult wages and perpetuates cycles of poverty within weaving communities.

What is GoodWeave doing about child labor in the rug industry and what impact has it had?

- GoodWeave, which operates in Germany, the UK, the US, Nepal and India, works to end illegal child labor in the handmade carpet industry. GoodWeave accomplishes this work through a comprehensive set of programs to include loom and factory monitoring; consumer product labeling; and funding and operating child rehabilitation and education.
- Through its independent certification program, the GoodWeave label assures consumers that: 1) No child labor was used in the manufacture of a carpet or rug; 2) GoodWeave inspectors have visited the loom or factory where the rug was made; and 3) A percentage of the purchase price for each rug helps fund the education of former child laborers.
- 60 percent of fees collected by GoodWeave's North American licensees funds educational programs for children in South Asia. The remainder is invested in developing a more socially aware marketplace through GoodWeave's consumer awareness campaign.
- Since GoodWeave began in 1994, child labor in the handmade carpet industry of South Asia has decreased by 60 percent, from an estimated one million to 250,000 child workers. GoodWeave has freed over 3,600 children, including those seen in Faces of Freedom. More than 9,000 children have benefited from the organization's education and rehabilitation programs.
- Since 1995, GoodWeave has certified approximately 7.5 million child-labor-free carpets worldwide. In the US, nearly 80 importer companies currently sell GoodWeave certified rugs, available through more than 1,500 stores, showrooms and online retailers that can be found at www.GoodWeave.org.