



PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

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RugMark Introduces GoodWeave™

New label to reflect more rigorous social and environmental standards, ensures child-labor-free rugs.

Building on its 15 years of protecting children and promoting ethical carpet production, this September RugMark and its industry partners launch GoodWeave, a new brand and label for its expanding certification program.

Like the RugMark label it replaces, GoodWeave stands for a deep commitment to the deterrence of child labor and the education and rehabilitation of rescued child workers in the carpet industries of India and Nepal. While RugMark's core mission remains the same, GoodWeave represents an enhanced set of values coinciding with the expansion of the label's humanitarian and environmental certification criteria.



The current RugMark symbol (left) will be replaced by the GoodWeave symbol (right).

As an associate member of ISEAL Alliance, a global leader in social and environmental standards setting and certification, RugMark is advancing its operations to another level by strengthening its governance to comply with ISEAL's Standard Setting Code of Good Practice. Standards for the GoodWeave certification will be more clearly defined, rigorous and transparent, giving consumers even greater confidence in the label.

Despite laws prohibiting child labor in the rug industry in Nepal and India, the practice is rampant. "Exploitation tends to happen in places where workers don't have rights, and pollution and depletion of resources occurs where people have no infrastructure or opportunity to function any differently," said Nina Smith, Executive Director of RugMark USA. "Creating better social and environmental conditions leads to greater control over economic choices that can lift communities from poverty."

Over the past year, RugMark has worked with a group of Nepali rug exporters to document industry labor and carpet weaving practices that affect the environment. Based on these observations, plans are underway to institute progressive standards to improve wage, health and safety conditions for workers and to reduce water and air pollution related to rug washing and dyeing. Technical assistance will be provided to GoodWeave members to help them make these improvements.

"We endorse the move to GoodWeave and we're proud of our progress towards eliminating child labor in partnership with the rug industry," says Stephanie Odegard, Founder of Odegard Carpets and founding member of RugMark USA's board. "We've provided critical educational opportunities for former child weavers. I am confident that the expanded GoodWeave program will allow us to progress in the area of social and environmental sustainability, too."

RugMark USA industry membership includes nearly 70 rug importers who sell their rugs through roughly 1,500 showrooms, retail outlets and Internet shopping sites. Sales of certified child-labor-free carpets represent nearly 4 percent of the total U.S. market of handmade rugs. RugMark's *Most Beautiful Rug* campaign against child labor contributed to a significant increase in sales of its certified rugs, with imports growing nearly 100 percent since the campaign began in 2006, from \$7.2 to \$13.1 million.

Since RugMark began its voluntary labeling program in 1995, the number of children trapped in exploitative carpet-making work has dropped from 1 million to 250,000. The goal is for GoodWeave to become the industry standard for doing business and, in turn, bring the incidence of child labor down to zero. Educational programs funded by certified rug sales and donations ensure former child laborers receive rehabilitation, daycare, formal schooling and vocational training. For more information, visit www.GoodWeave.org.

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GoodWeave Certification at a Glance

Scope of the Problem: Why does the GoodWeave Certification Matter?

- An estimated 250,000 children in South Asia—some as young as 4 years—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.
- Rugs are among South Asia's top export products and the industry is a major employer of the poor.

RugMark's Impact: Child Labor in South Asia's Rug Industry is on the Decline

- Since RugMark's inception in 1994:
 - Child labor in the handmade carpet industry of South Asia has decreased by 60%, from an estimated 1 million to 250,000 child workers.
 - RugMark has freed more than 3,600 children.
 - More than 9,000 children have benefited from the organization's education and rehabilitation programs.
 - RugMark has certified more than 5.5 million child-labor-free carpets.
- Since 2006, North American sales of certified rugs have grown significantly, with imports increasing by nearly 100%, from \$7.2 to \$13.1 million.
- 60% of certification fees fund educational programs for children in South Asia. Remaining funds support efforts to develop a more socially aware marketplace through *The Most Beautiful Rug* awareness campaign.

What Does the GoodWeave Label Mean?

- The GoodWeave label is your best assurance that no child labor was used in the manufacture of a carpet or rug, and it represents an important step in RugMark's evolution.
- With awareness of social and environmental issues in textiles on the rise, RugMark is responding with a more rigorous standards program that will also foster the organization's continued growth.
- While ending child labor and providing resources for children and families in weaving communities remains RugMark's core purpose, GoodWeave will raise the bar for its member companies via an expanded standard that will address broader labor and environmental issues.
- The GoodWeave label has a contemporary new look and a name that reflects RugMark's mission in the world of ethically produced textiles.