

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Reader,

As President of the Oriental Rug Importers Association, I take great pride in making the following announcement:

On May 25, 1999, at the General Membership Meeting of the ORIA, the membership overwhelmingly approved Association sponsorship of a pilot school for children ages 6 to 10 in Sheikhu Pura-Attoc, villages in the outskirts of Lahore, Pakistan, containing one of the highest concentrations of carpet weaving factories in Pakistan. By approving this sponsorship, the ORIA committed itself to developing and maintaining the school through the Child Care Foundation (CCF), a non-profit organization, for a period of three (3) years, during the course of which we shall open additional schools, day-care centers and other facilities. At the same meeting, ORIA members further endorsed the Association's long-term commitment to similar ongoing programs for the establishment of other schools in rug weaving countries through organizations similar to CCF.

In addition to this important group effort, individual member companies of the ORIA have unilaterally established schools, hospitals, day-care centers, and other facilities in Pakistan and India on their own initiative. The Association is planning similar sponsorship programs in India, conditions permitting. Collectively, these efforts serve as examples of what can and should be done by our industry to ameliorate the conditions of children in the poorest areas of rug weaving countries.



There is no better way to combat the problem of illegal child labor than to attack the underlying problems of poverty and lack of education. Children who work at the looms with their parents do so out of economic necessity. Schools, day-care centers and hospitals, established at a reasonable or nominal cost, are an important part of the solution.

This ground-breaking initiative, which will serve as a pilot example for many more schools to come, is only the beginning. This initiative will set us on a course that should dramatically improve conditions and ultimately eliminate illegal child labor. Its importance cannot be overstated. I am extremely proud to be part of this initiative—which involved the efforts of many individuals over many years—and I am particularly proud of the ORIA's continued dedication to providing a better way of life for needy families and children in rug-weaving areas across the globe.

As for us, in order to achieve all of our goals and to increase productivity, we need your input and your participation. A single individual has never and could never represent the best thinking of the age.

Closer to home, our members are also readying themselves for what promises to be one of the most exciting summer markets ever—International Area Rug Market at AmericasMart Atlanta. We invite you to join us there, July 15-18.

Thanking you,

Sincerely,

DAVID HAROUNIAN  
President  
Oriental Rug Importers Association, Inc.