Liberia and Southern Sudan represent two extremes. At one end of the spectrum is the Liberian case, where children actively seek to join the NPFL and ULIMO primarily for power and economic survival. At the other end, in Uganda and Southern Sudan, children are abducted and forced to join armed factions.

The challenge is three-fold: (i) how to protect children and provide them with alternatives so that they do not become child soldiers; (ii) how to remove child soldiers from active combat; and (iii) how to reintegrate children into families and communities if they have been soldiers. To properly and adequately address these challenges, one must understand the root causes from which children become soldiers. Although causality is at times difficult to prove in the case of child soldiers, the combination of three causal variables; namely, structural violence, leadership and poverty often produce ripe conditions for them.[5] Poor children and children exposed to harsh or unstable social conditions are disproportionately targeted for both voluntary conscription and forced abduction. Fundamentally, addressing the economic and/or societal instability of children in situations of armed conflict becomes crucial. (See *Key Sectors*)

4.   Towards a Canadian Approach

Canada's human security approach could be used as a methodology for analyzing child soldiers. This entails examining issues of prevention and demobilization from the perspective of a child and child soldier's (respectively) needs. This approach would compliment well the methodology which CIDA and UNICEF have developed to deal with child rights and child soldiers. Such an approach could be driven by the following principles:

(i)   Through the development assistance program, Canada seeks to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence by supporting initiatives that address problems directly and that build the capacity of key organizations in partner countries. CIDA's approach is to focus on improving conditions in which children find themselves, to place priority of seeking to eliminate the most severe forms of exploitation, and to address the causes of abuse, exploitation and violence. CIDA's approach is based on the Rights of the Child, situating issues connected to child soldiers therein. In this approach, the child is viewed as 'subject' not 'object' and thus has voice. Demobilized child soldiers will be a key resource for understanding which approaches will be successful in meeting the needs of children in armed conflict-- both in prevention and demobilization;

(ii)   A community-based approach will be most successful for suggesting both alternatives and techniques for reintegrating child soldiers into the social fabric of their communities. Community leaders will be able to respond to the reintegration of child soldiers based on local traditions and norms;

(iii)   In conjunction with a community-based approach, local, national, regional and international NGOs who work closely with civil society will be aware of strategies for prevention, demobilization and re-integration. They will be able to mobilize expertise and resources to detract children from voluntarily joining armed groups, while at the