



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

**Needs Assessment of Recently Displaced
in Kut District, Wassit Governorate**

February 2007

1. Background

It is estimated that over 1.8 million people are currently displaced within Iraq as of 11 February 2007,¹ 690,000 of whom were displaced after February 2006, following the bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra. Sectarian violence has since escalated, alongside anti-state insurgency, counter-insurgency and crime, leading to widespread violence and insecurity throughout Iraq.

This report analyses the background and current situation of IDPs displaced to the district of Kut, in Wassit Governorate since February 2006. It focuses on assessing needs at the district level, rather than the Governorate level, in an effort to better understand the needs of specific IDP populations, so that agencies can tailor assistance to needs identified

Kut District is the administrative capital of Wassit Governorate, it is located in South East Iraq, and shares a border to the east with Iran. The Tigris River runs through Wassit, and is a key transportation route for goods and produce, connecting Governorates in the South to Baghdad and the centre.

The influx of IDP families in Kut, has not yet led to direct tension with the host community, however, the potential for conflict remains due to increased demands on public services which are poorly equipped and already stretched to capacity. The real estate market, rental prices, the cost of basic food stuffs, and fuel have also increased dramatically across the South, making living conditions especially difficult for IDPs who have been forced to leave behind their homes and livelihoods.

II. Methodology of monitoring activities

Monitoring activities in Wassit were undertaken by UNHCR's implementing partner who is managing assistance programmes on behalf of UNHCR in the Governorate. The monitoring was targeted at the district of Kut in an area that is known to have a high concentration of IDPs.

In order to address the needs of IDPs in specific districts, UNHCR's partner visited IDP locations to assess conditions and monitor the target population. Monitoring teams visited locations in Kut from November 2006 to January 2007, and also spoke to stakeholders with knowledge of the area.

This assessment is not a representative sample of the Governorate of Wassit, but it is an account of the identified needs of IDPs who have sought refuge in the district of Kut.²

¹ See Cluster F, *Internally Displaced Persons in Iraq – Update 11 February 2007*.

² For information on the IDP situation in the whole Governorate, please see: IOM, *Emergency IDP Monitoring and Assessments*, 11 November 2006.

III. Analysis of UNHCR monitoring findings

a) Number and profile of IDP population in Al-Kut

UNHCR monitored 159 households in the district of Kut, representing a sample of 911 individuals, 55.3% of the surveyed households were male, and 44.7% were female. Only two households described themselves as being female headed, and the average family had six people. The size of the sample in this assessment varies depending on how many IDP households answered a specific question during the monitoring interview.

IDPs surveyed in Kut did not indicate their religious or ethnic background, this likely to be linked to concerns over security. However, 99.4% of monitored IDPs said they had been targeted because of belonging to a specific religion or sect.

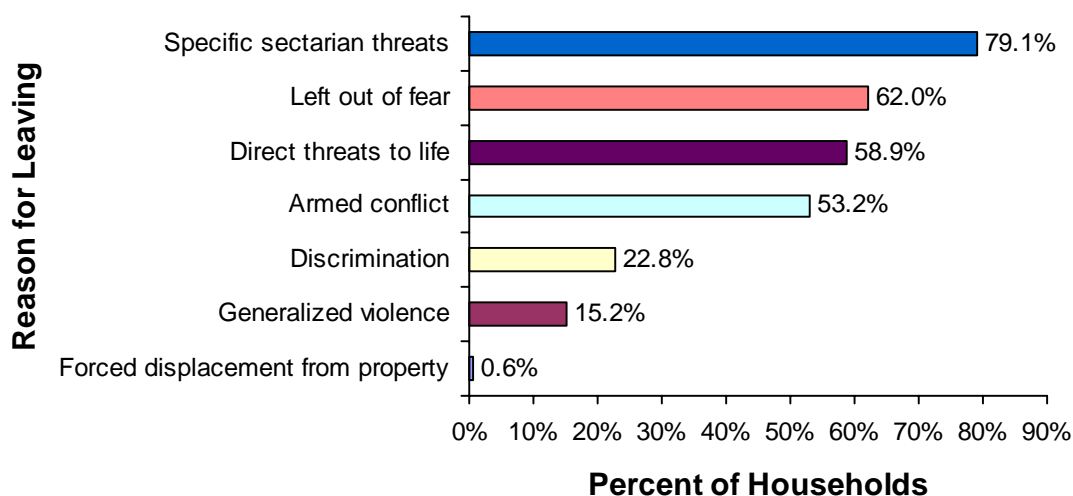
b) Place of residence prior to departure and reason for flight

The majority of IDPs monitored in Kut were displaced from Baghdad (87.3%), 10.8% fled from Diyala, 1.3% were displaced from within Wassit, and one household (0.6%) was displaced from Salah Al-Din. IDPs appear to have fled in high numbers from districts in Baghdad Governorate, for example, 42.7% of all IDPs were displaced from Abu Ghraib, 15.9% from Al-Resafa, and 15.3% were displaced from Karkh District.

IDPs monitored in Kut fled their places of residence for a number of security related reasons. Nearly 80% of households stated they had experienced sectarian threats, and 58.9% of households said they had received specific threats to their lives (*see Figure 2*).

Furthermore, over 60% of households said they left their home due to the fear of violence, not only due to a direct attack. It is likely that as this fear continues to spread further, the numbers of civilians fleeing because of the fear of potential violence will increase dramatically. The majority of IDPs (99.5%) said they had fled because of events that took place after the bombing of Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra.

Figure 1: Reason for leaving place of residence
(Sample of 159 IDP households)

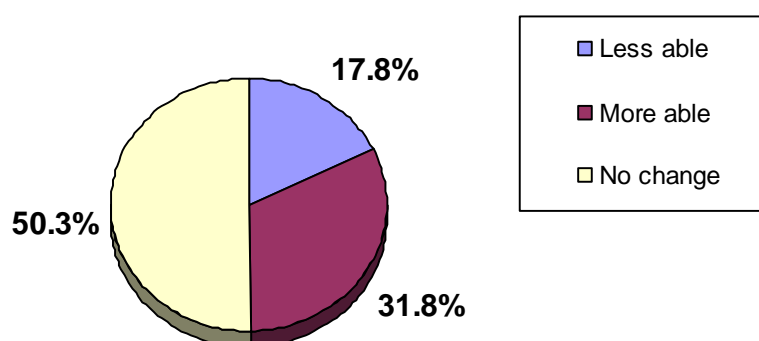


c) Security and relationship with the host community

All IDPs monitored by UNHCR said that they felt safe in their current location in Kut, and all (100%) reported that they were received well by the host community. However, as violence and displacement continues it is possible that the arrival of further IDPs in the district will cause tension and hostility, due to overcrowding and increased demands on public services.

Of 159 households monitored by UNHCR, 100% said that women and girls felt safe outside of their house in their current location. However, 17.3% households said that women and girls felt less able to move around outside of the home since 2003 (this may be related to experiences in their place of origin). Over 50% indicated there had been no change in women’s freedom of movement since 2003,³ and 31.8% indicated they were more able to move around.

Figure 2: Women's ability to move outside of the home after 2003
(Sample of 157 IDP households)



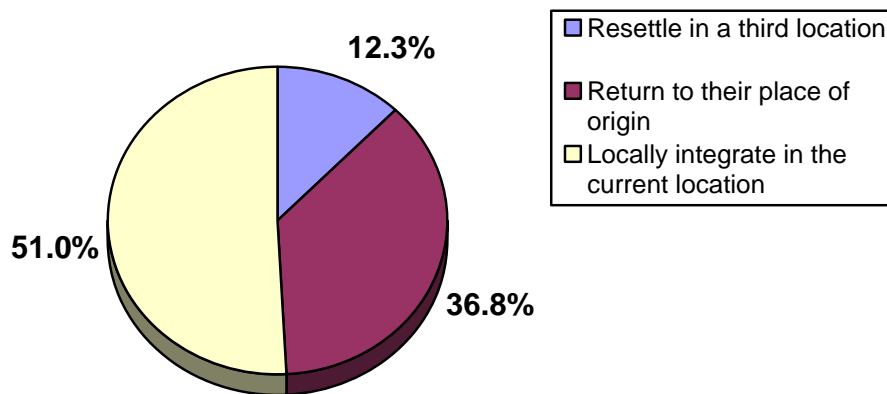
³ This is in comparison to the place IDPs were residing in 2003.

d) Intentions

The majority of IDPs (51%) monitored in Kut (*see Figure 3*) indicated their intention to integrate in their current location, while 12.3% of IDPs intend to move again and settle in a third location. 36.8% of IDPs are planning to return to their place of origin, this is despite a high number also indicating that they had to sell or lost property prior to displacement. A significant number of IDPs have indicated their intention to settle in Kut, emphasizing the need to urgently address whether existing services in the district will be able to cope with the growing number of IDPs.

Figure 3: IDP intentions

(Sample of 155 IDP households which indicated their intentions)



IV. Analysis of identified needs and priorities in Kut

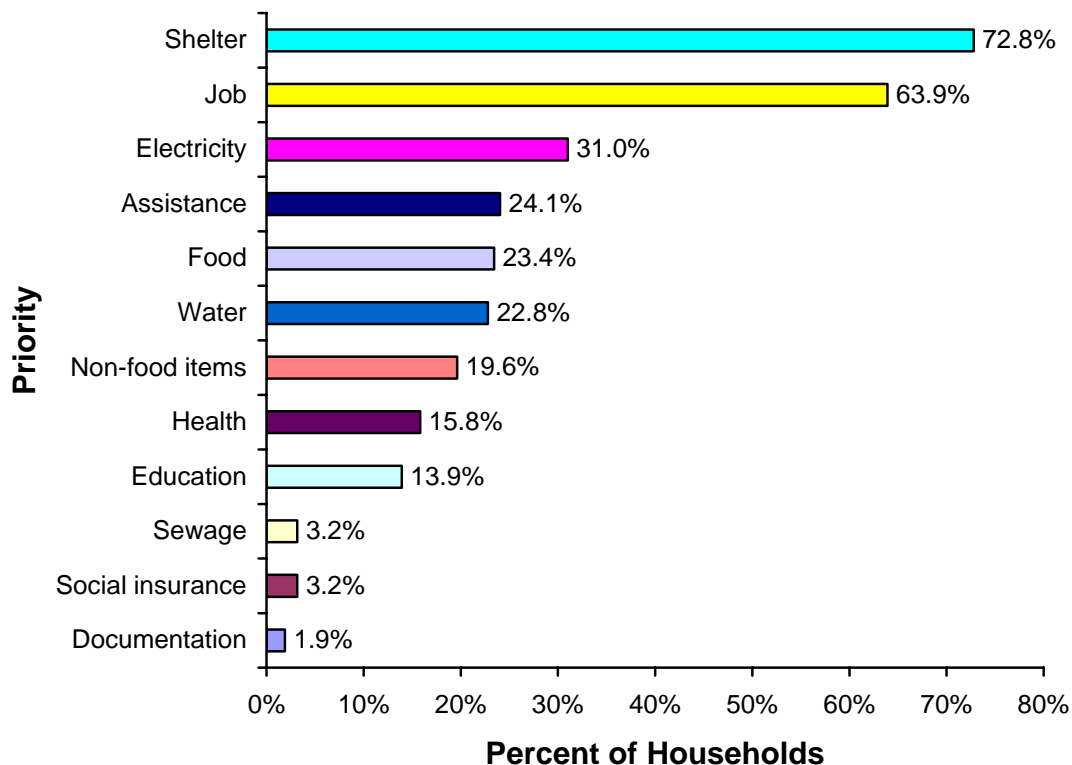
Priorities

This section analyses the situation and needs of IDPs in Kut, and prioritises them in order of the needs identified by IDPs themselves. When asked to list their top three priorities, 72.8% of IDPs indicated shelter, 63.9% said employment or a job, and 31% stated that access to electricity was a priority. IDPs also identified the need for further forms of assistance, 24.1% indicated a need for general assistance, 23.4% said food was a top priority, and 19.6% indicated a need for non-food items.

Improved access to services appears to be a priority for IDPs in Kut. While electricity was identified as the main service priority, 22.8% of IDPs identified water, and 15.8% highlighted health. Overall, shelter was not highlighted by all IDPs monitored, indicating a slightly improved housing situation, as compared to other monitored Governorates in the South.

Figure 4: IDP households top priorities

(Sample of 158 indicated their top three priorities. The values do not add up to 100% because households listed up to three priorities for assistance.)

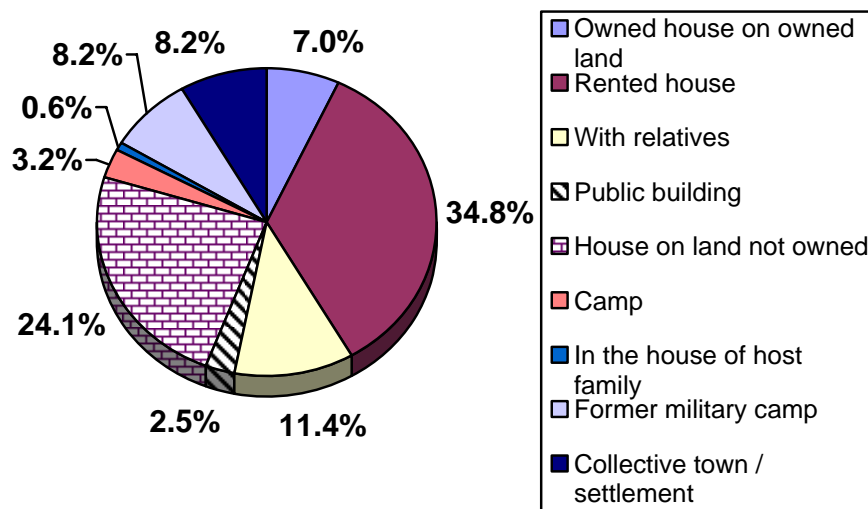


a) **Housing and shelter**

UNHCR monitoring revealed that shelter was a top priority for IDPs in Kut, with over 70% saying it was their greatest need. The majority of IDPs in Kut (92.4%) describe themselves as living in an urban location, 3.8% said they were living in rural areas, 3.2% were living in a camp, and one household indicated they were living in a semi-rural location.

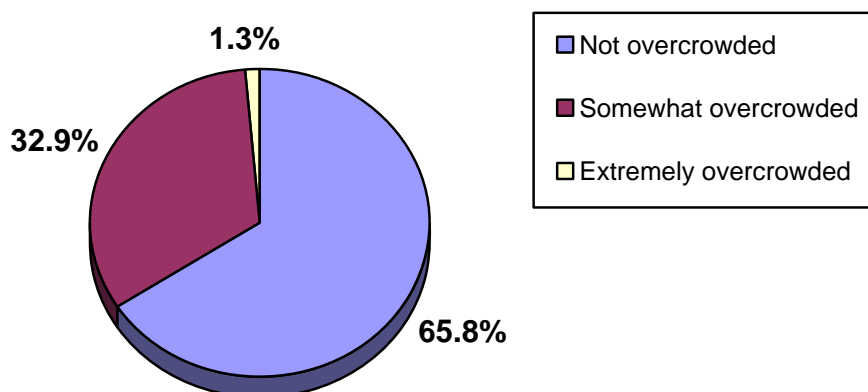
IDPs in Kut live in a variety of different accommodation, however, only a small number are residing in what can be described as sustainable or permanent housing. Only 7% of IDPs owned their own house (including the land), and 34% of households were renting accommodation. The remaining IDPs appear to be living in temporary accommodation, including 24.1% who live on land that is not owned, 8.2% who live in a collective or settlement, 8.2% who live in a former military camp, and 2.5% living in public buildings. 11.5% of IDPs were living with relatives and only one family lived with a host family (0.6%).

Figure 5: Type of accommodation
 (Sample of 156 IDP households which indicated their housing type)



IDPs in Kut said they were not facing pressure to leave their current place of residence, through either the threat of eviction or intimidation. In contrast to the district of Amara in Missan Governorate, where over 30% of IDP households faced the threat of eviction, only one household in Kut said they felt pressure to leave. Figure 7 outlines the degree of overcrowding in IDP housing in Kut, and while 65.8% said they did not live in crowded accommodation, 32.9% indicated they lived in ‘somewhat crowded’ accommodation.

Figure 6: Degree of crowding in housing
 (Sample of 158 IDP households)



While 100% of IDPs monitored said they owned property prior to their displacement, a significant amount now had problems accessing that property. 59% of households did not know if they could now access property, 35.1% said that their property was now occupied by militia

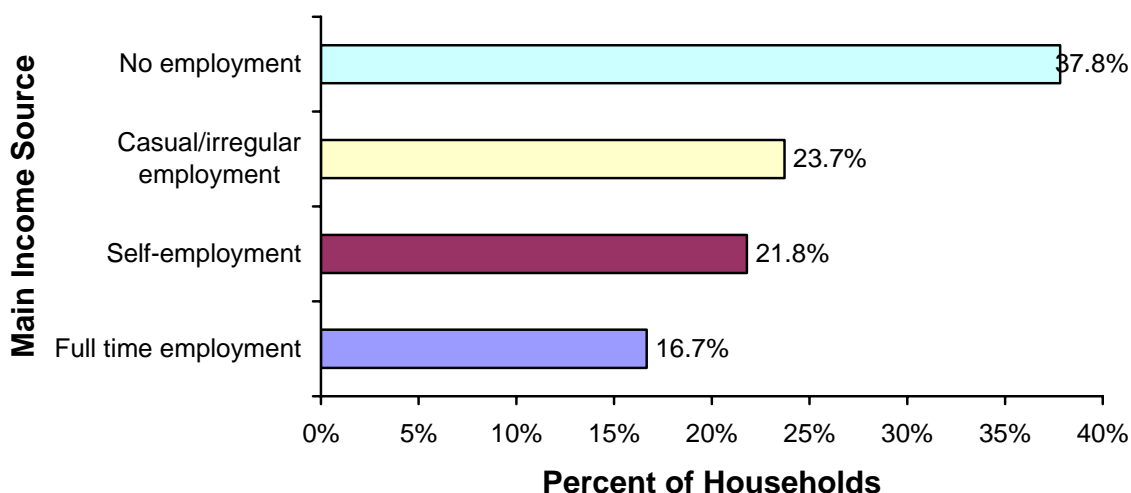
groups, 4.5% said that their property was occupied by private citizens, and 0.6% said the property was now in military use. Over 90% of households indicated that they were forced to sell their property. It is this uncertainty over property ownership that reduces the possibility of return if and when IDPs choose to do so.

b) Employment and income

Unemployment levels across Iraq are notoriously high, for both IDPs and civilians in their place of origin, however, finding employment in Kut appears to be a particular problem for IDPs in Kut. A high percentage IDPs (63.9%) monitored in Kut indicated that a job/employment was one of their greatest needs. Nearly 40% stated they had no employment, 23.7% said they had casual or irregular employment, 21.8% said they were self employed, and only 16.7% said that a member of their household had some form of full time employment. The main sources of income are shown in *figure 8*.

Figure 7: Main source of income

(Sample of 156 IDP households which indicated their main source of income)



c) Assistance and access to food

23.4% of IDPs monitored said one of their greatest priorities was food assistance. 76.6% of households said they had access to PDS rations in their current place of residence, however, over 70% also said that they relied solely on their food rations to feed their families (note that these figures do not reflect the quality or quantity of food, nor indicate the regularity of delivery; reports indicate that quality, quantity, access and regularity of the PDS is not consistent across all districts and governorates). Of those remaining families unable to access their PDS rations, the majority were having problems registering details in their new location. 19.6% of those monitored also said that non-food items were a priority, however, 52.2% of households had received some food assistance since displacement, and 14% had received assistance with Shelter.

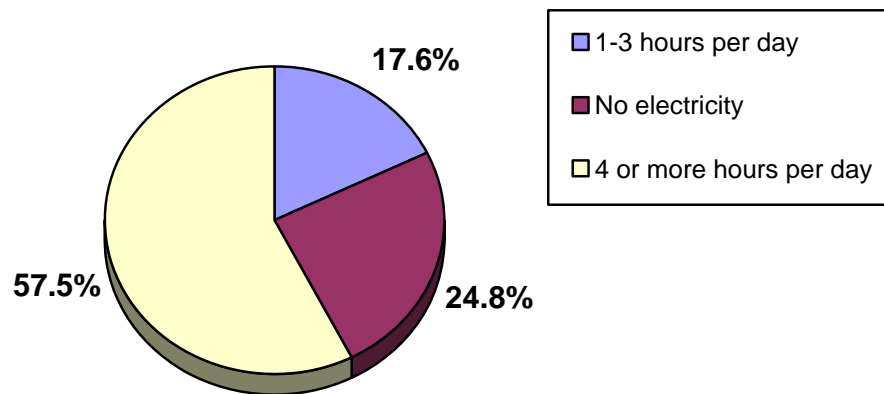
d) Access to services

IDPs identified access to public services as being a priority in Kut. The section below outlines exactly what access to basic services IDPs in Kut have.

Electricity and fuel

Access to electricity was identified as a concern for IDPs living in Kut, who despite living in urban areas have problems with electricity supply. Poor access to electricity is a common problem across Iraq for all citizens, with most household receiving electricity periodically at intervals throughout the day. While access to electricity has not improved since 2003, 60% of IDPs indicated they had 4 or more hours of electricity per day. However, of particular concern are the 23.8% of IDPs who no access to electricity, and the 17.6% who received between one and three hours per day. Over two thirds of households indicated that could not access fuel, and some IDPs stated they could not access fuel for cooking such as Propane or Kerosene

Figure 8: Access to electricity
(Sample of 153 IDP households)



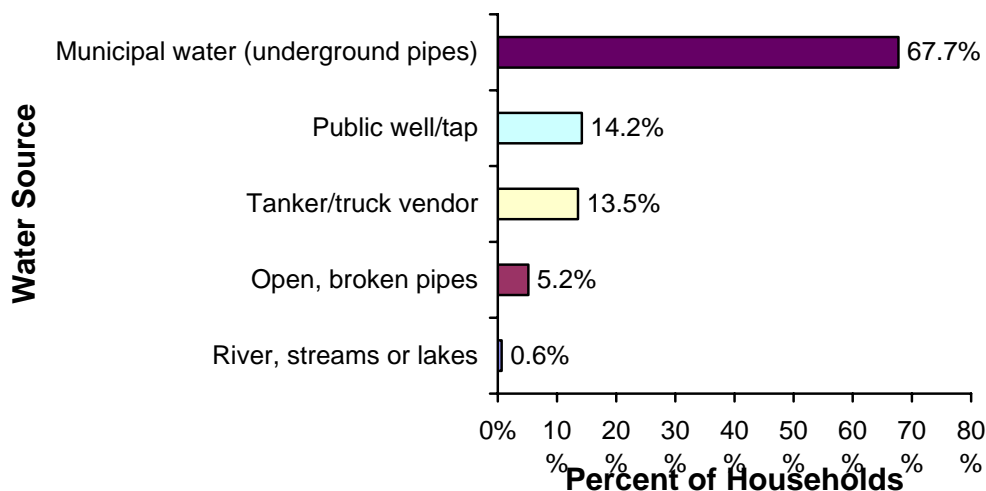
Water and sanitation

While water was listed as a priority by 22.8% of households monitored, overall 87.4% stated that they had access to safe drinking water in their village/town. Of the remaining IDPs who could not access clean drinking water (22 households) the majority indicated it was due insufficient quality. Most households accessed water (for general use) through municipal pipes (67.7), public wells and taps (14.2%), tankers and trucks (13.5%), and only one family had to use water from broken pipes or streams.

Monitoring revealed that 98.7% IDPs monitored in Kut had enough water for drinking and cooking, 98.4% had enough water for hygiene, and all households had access to toilet facilities

Figure 9: Main sources of water

(Sample of 155 IDP households. The values do not add up to 100% because households listed up to three water sources)

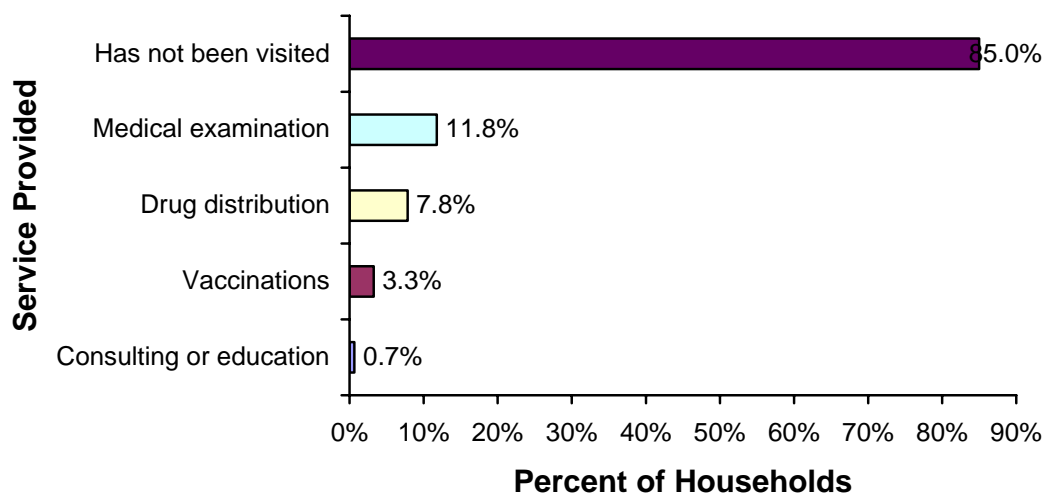


Health

IDPs have good access to health facilities in Kut, and do not appear to be denied access because of their displaced status. 84.9% of households monitored said they had access to health services in their town or village, and 67.1% of households also stated they had access to most needed drugs. 34% of monitored households indicated that malnutrition was a major concern, 22% said child health was also a concern, and 85% said they had not being visited by a health worker (*see Figure 10*).

Figure 10: Health services provided by a health worker

(Sample of 153 IDP households)



Education

The majority of IDPs (83.1%) monitored in Kut had access to education in their village or town, and only a small number of IDPs faced problems transferring education documents. Both male (67.1%) and female (32.9%) IDPs are enrolled in primary, secondary and intermediate level

education, while no IDP children were enrolled in higher education. Out of the 45 children who were not attending school, twelve did not attend due to distance, five because they were refused access, four said it was due to financial restraints, and the remaining households did not indicate why their children were not attending school.