1. Introduction

Northern Uganda has been engulfed in conflict since 1986. Conflict-affected areas are mainly Acholi (Kitgum, Gulu and Pader districts), Lango (Apac and Lira districts), parts of Teso (Soroti, Katakwi and Kaberamaido districts), and Madi (Adjumani district). An estimated 1.6 million persons are displaced as a result of the conflict, with many more affected.

Access of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to health services has deteriorated over time. This is due to lack of supplies, support, and supervision mainly because of insecurity and protection issues. Insecurity has pushed qualified health workers to the safety of the towns. This led to the deterioration of the health indicators of IDPs, as was revealed in a study carried out by a WHO team in 2002 and additional health assessments in IDP camps conducted since then.

The presence of WHO in the North has the goal of improving access of the IDPs to quality health services with particular emphasis on:
- Immunization of children and pregnant women,
- Reproductive health,
- Health education concerning the common illnesses,
- Malaria control and prevention,
- HIV/AIDS control and prevention,
- Disease surveillance and epidemic response,
- Health coordination.

2. Rapid health assessment

A rapid assessment of these health conditions were carried out in the camps and the following the findings were obtained:

- **Access to health service:**
  Access to quality health remains a problem of the IDPs except for those living near the district headquarters where the hospitals are situated. Traditional birth attendants (TBAs), nursing assistants, Community Resource Persons (CORPS) are the providers of health services in most health facilities in the camps. It is only occasionally that qualified health personnel are available in the IDP camps to provide health services.
• **Reproductive Health Service:**
  Reproductive health services are generally absent in the camps. Services provided are antenatal care and limited conduction of deliveries by Nursing Assistants.

• **Immunization Coverage:**
  Immunization coverage has greatly improved in most of the districts (Gulu, Pader and Kitgum), except in Lira district where cases of measles are still being reported.

• **HIV/AIDS control and prevention:**
  Condom distribution is the major HIV/AIDS activity being given by some health units in the camps. Some Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) outreach activities are being carried out by Gulu Hospital.

• **Malaria:**
  Malaria control: HBMF using Homapak is carried out in only some camps where CORPS are trained on its use. Replenishment of supplies is irregular. Insecticide-Treated Nets (ITN) distribution to pregnant women and IPT (intermittent presumptive treatment) of malaria in pregnancy are also carried out only in some camps where there is a qualified midwife.

• **Disease Surveillance:**
  Collection of weekly or monthly health data from the peripheral health units is a problem due to difficulty in sending them. Insecurity has rendered access difficult.

• **Health Education:**
  Health education activities are mainly limited to health messages aired by Mega FM in Gulu district. Health education in the camps is rarely given.

• **Health Coordination:**
  Health coordination meetings were irregularly held in Gulu and Kitgum district. They are not held in Lira district.

3. **Achievements**

  - In conjunction with members of the District Health Teams and other health actors, WHO has identified health gaps in each of the districts of Lira, Gulu, Pader and Kitgum.
  - A meeting has been held to discuss action plans to close health gaps identified by a team from WHO/UNICEF and the districts. The districts concerned are now implementing some action plans.
  - Regular health coordination meetings are now being held in Gulu and Kitgum districts.
  - A project proposal is now being prepared. Costing of the activities is being done.
  - WHO is now an active participant in disease surveillance and the control of epidemic diseases in the North. For example, WHO is partaking in the control of the recent cholera outbreak in Gulu district.

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