

# MPs demand explanation on nodding disease

By John Odjek

Parliament has asked the Government to explain measures it is taking to support victims and families affected by the nodding diseases syndrome.

MPs learnt with shock that Dr Suzanne Gazda of the US-based Centre for Disease Control who, through a charity organisation Hope for Humans, had constructed Tumangu Rehabilitation Centre in Kitgum district, was leaving the country due to financial difficulties.

The sh200m centre was built in 2015 and faces closure unless the Government takes it over and funds it. The disease, whose cause was unknown, was discovered in the Northern region in 1998, where it affected children and the youth, causing victims to shake their heads, leading to paralysis.

## MPS speak out

Beatrice Anywar (Kitgum Municipality) on Wednesday presented recommendations of the parliamentary committee on gender, labour and social development on the disease.

The committee asked the Government to support victims and families affected by nodding disease.

They proposed that seeds, ox ploughs be given to support families affected by the syndrome.

Other proposals include giving victims of the syndrome special



Mothers and some of their children suffering from nodding disease at Atanga Health Centre III in Pader district in 2012

medical cards to enable them access medical services. Another proposal for the Police to set up Police posts near the centre for security especially of medical personnel.

## Committee demands

The committee wants government to upgrade health centres in the areas affected by the disease and build rehabilitation centres for victims.

Dr Ruth Aceng, the minister for health, informed Parliament that a drug had been discovered which kills the worms causing the disease, but they only kill the young worms.

She told MPs that the Ministry of Health handles the disease as special case and the victims need special medicines.

The minister said the government has come up with a plan to upgrade all health centres in the country with those at level II taken to III and level IV to V. She said a rehabilitation centre was planned for Pader district, depending on funds availability.

Aceng said Pader district has to get a written commitment from Hope for Humans who constructed Tumangu Rehabilitation Centre showing they had handed over the centre to the district.

Gilbert Olanya (Kilak South) asked for a reminder of the report about the 10 children who were taken to the US for treatment in 2015 and were returned.

Betty Aol Ocan (Gulu) said victims of the disease need

support from other ministries such as the ministry of education, agriculture, water and environment.

Jacob Oulanyah, the deputy Speaker of Parliament, directed the Government to explain the measures it was undertaking to combat the disease and the support to victims and families affected by the disease.

Oulanyah said reports that food had been provided to the victims and families through the Office of the Prime Minister were proved to be false.

The report of the parliamentary committee on gender, labour and social development on nodding disease said the Tumangu Rehabilitation Centre has not been fully used due to lack of medical equipment and staff.