

Traditional healers want recognition

By Paul Kiwuuwa

Traditional healers under the umbrella National Council of Traditional Healers and Herbalists Associations want to be included on the Uganda Mental Health Advisory Board (UMHAB).

Led by the association's secretary general, Dr Abdul Karim Musaasizi, the healers requested legislators on the Parliament's committee on health to amend clause 58 of the mental health Bill 2014, by inserting a clause to include one person to represent traditional healers and herbalists on the mental health board that offers advisory role in the treatment of mental health ailments.

The UMHAB comprises a chairperson and 10 members qualified in medicine and social

workers, senior psychiatrists, principal, psychiatrists nurse human rights, social medical workers, and an advocate nominated by the Uganda Law Society.

Musaasizi and his team appeared before the committee to give their views on the Mental Health Bill 2014.

The parliamentary committee on health has started scrutinising the Bill, which wants to repeal the Mental Treatment Act of 1964.

The object of the Bill is to provide for care and treatment for persons with mental illness at primary healthcare centres and more stakeholders are expected to give their views on the Bill.

The Bill was first tabled in 2014, during the ninth Parliament, but it was not passed. The chairperson of the parliamentary health

committee, Dr Micheal Bukonya, said: "We will review the Bill and by early this year, it should be presented in Parliament for debate."

"We request to insert a clause to provide space for one person to represent traditional healers and herbalists on the board because we play a big role in the treatment and prescription of traditional medicines to many patients suffering from mental-related ailments," Musaasizi said.

Musaasizi said most of the patients suffering from the mental related illness on failing to heal in hospitals seek treatment from the traditional healers and herbalists.

However, the MPs did not allow for amendments to include the traditional healers and herbalists on the mental health board.