

# Nodding syndrome children die as care centre remains close

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**OMORO.** Two children, who were suffering from nodding syndrome, have died just a month after a care centre in Omoro District that catered for them was closed due to shortage of funds.

At least 29 children suffering from the syndrome were in December last year sent home after the closure of the centre in Odek Sub-county, Omoro District.

The care centre has been offering medical, personal care, special schooling and nutritious meals to nodding syndrome children since 2012.

Mr Caesar Okot, the programme manager of Hope for Humans, a non-governmental organisation which has been running the centre, on Tuesday said during a meeting with members of the Omoro District Nodding Syndrome Task force that the children died between December and January this year.

## Children's plight

Mr Okot said one of the children identified as Denis Olara, 17, was found dead at his parents home in Bolo Parish, Awere Sub-county in Pader District four days after the centre was closed, while another from the same village identified as Agness Ajok, 15, passed on last week.

Mr Okot noted that the children died after relapsing due to poor medical care, nutrition and negligence by their parents and relatives.

"The death of these children indicates the level of their vulnerability while at home. Their health is dete-



Tragic. A child with nodding syndrome in Atanga Sub-county, Pader District. JULIUS OCUNGI

riorating because of inadequate care and negligence by their parents and relatives," Mr Okot said.

He added that other children have not been able to get their medication for a month due to long distance from health centres.

"We are worried about the fate of

the children who are still within the community. If government doesn't intervene and reopen the centre to provide treatment to the children, they will relapse and die," Mr Okot said.

The Omoro District Chairperson, Mr Douglas Peter Okello, said the

district has no capacity to fund operations of the centre and called for intervention of well-wishers and government.

Mr Okello added that they had earlier requested Shs500 million supplementary budget from the Finance ministry to help run the centre; to date they have not received feedback.

"We are continuing with outreach programmes to check these children but we realised conditions are not good. Nutrition and medication remains a very big challenge to those affected because of their impoverished backgrounds," Mr Okello said.

He blamed the government for failing to honour its promise of supplying nodding syndrome medicines to households with food.

"We are in crisis, the children are in danger..., we have lost lives because the only care centre giving them medicine is no more," Mr Okello said.

Information from the district health department indicates that the health centres of the children have since deteriorated.

## THE DISEASE

Nodding syndrome is characterised by head nodding, seizures and retarded growth. It was first confirmed in the Omoro Sub-county in 2012 and since then, a total of 299 cases were registered. A total of 29 children have since died from the syndrome.