



**Reported.** According to statistics from Omoro District, six girls suffering from Nodding syndrome have been raped.

BY JULIUS OCUNGI  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

**OMORO.** Lucky Aromorach, now 18, was diagnosed with nodding syndrome in 2012 and has since been battling the disease.

But before she could recover fully, the mother of a four-year-old boy, is expecting another child whose father she does not know.

When Aromorach was 14 years old, she started experiencing uncontrolled seizures, head nodding and general body weakness.

After diagnosis, she was found to be having nodding syndrome and immediately put on medication at Odek Health Centre III, in Odek Sub-county Omoro District.

The 14-year-old girl started showing signs of improvement and resumed school but fell prey to a defiler.

One evening as she returned home from St Paul Primary School in Odek Sub-county, Aromorach was attacked by an unknown man who defiled her by the roadside.

"I remember it was becoming dark in the evening when I was returning home from school that a man attacked me. It was a market day, he grabbed me and pushed me into a nearby bush and forcefully slept with me before abandoning me in a lot of pain," she recounts.

Out of fear, she didn't share her ordeal with her mother and decided to silently drop out of school while in Primary Six.

However, her mother got angry after realising she was pregnant and demanded to know who was responsible.

"My mother became rude to me, she started abusing me, sometimes chasing me away from home to go look for the man who impregnated me yet I didn't know him," she says.

She is one of the girls suffering from nodding syndrome in Omoro who have fallen prey to defilers and rapists.

#### Impregnated

As she was recovering from the strange syndrome with her three-year-old baby, Aromorach was again impregnated by another unknown man last year.

She said the man took advantage of

# Double jeopardy as nodding syndrome victims are raped



**Unfortunate.** Lucky Aromorach (right) attends a meeting at Odek Health Centre III, Omoro District, with other children recovering from nodding syndrome on Monday. PHOTO BY JULIUS OCUNGI

her condition and slept with her last year with promises of marrying her.

But after realising she was pregnant, the man ran away. Her mother also chased her away from home accusing her of being a burden to the family.

Daily Monitor met Aromorach on Monday at Odek Health Centre III, where she had gone to attend a meeting convened for nodding syndrome affected children.

At eight months pregnant now, she looks frail and skinny.

"I am weak. I don't have enough food to eat at my grandmother's home. The man responsible for the pregnancy has refused to take care of me," she says.

Alice Akello 18, is another nodding syndrome victim who fell prey to a rapist and got pregnant.

Her mother Ms Doreen Akongo, a resident of Bolo Parish in Awere Sub-county, Pader District, says they

got concerned about Akello's body changes in August last year only to realise later that she was pregnant.

who could have raped and made her pregnant. Someone must have heartlessly taken advantage of my daughter's condition," Ms Akongo says.

For Ms Lucy Acaa, a resident of Lamola Parish in Odek Sub-county, Omoro District, her 16-year-old daughter who is suffering from nodding syndrome is lucky to have escaped an attempted rape last year.

She says an unknown man entered the grass thatched hut, where her daughter was lying after suffering seizure attack during day time in an attempt to sleep with her but she fought back by screaming hard.

"If my daughter had not screamed, she would have been impregnated and perhaps infected with HIV. She is vulnerable to the community," Ms Acaa says.

The district police commander, Mr David Kamugisha says four cases of rape and defilement against nodding disease afflicted children were re-

#### What they say...

"When the Odek Nodding Syndrome Centre was still open, our officials used to sensitise the community. People used to fear and have respect for the girls but the case has since changed. We expect this to even get worse if government and other stake holders don't intervene,"  
**CAESAR OKOT,**  
PROGRAMME  
MANAGER AT HOPE  
FOR HUMANS

"My daughter is seven months pregnant but we have no idea who could have raped and made her pregnant. Someone must have heartlessly taken advantage of her condition."  
**DOREEN AKONGO,**  
MOTHER



"The Ministry of Health has made some progress in fulfilling its mandate as far as the disease response is concerned,"  
**RUTH ACENG,**  
HEALTH MINISTER

"My mother became rude to me. She started abusing me, sometimes sending me away from home to go look for the man who impregnated me yet I didn't know him,"  
**LUCKY AROMORACH,**  
VICTIM

## 229

CASES OF NODDING SYNDROME WERE REGISTERED IN OMORO DISTRICT IN 2012 AND 22 CHILDREN HAVE SINCE DIED

Ms Akongo notes that when they tried asking their daughter about her pregnancy, she couldn't remember who made her pregnant.

"My daughter is seven months pregnant now, but we have no idea

ported between December last year and early this year.

He, however, says only two of the reported cases are being prosecuted since they have evidence adding that two other cases have stalled due to limited evidence.

Leaders say nodding syndrome children have been rejected by the government, especially in the districts of Kitgum, Pader and Omoro.

Health minister Ruth Aceng, however, said on Tuesday the ministry had made some progress in fulfilling its mandate as far as the disease response is concerned.

She said three treatment centres were activated in Kitgum, Lamwo and Pader.