

Parents stuck with nodding disease syndrome patients

OMORO

By Arnest Tumwesige

Parents with children suffering from nodding disease syndrome have asked the Government to take over the running of the now closed rehabilitation centre in Omoro district.

The Hope for Human Centre, located in Aromo-Wagilobo, Odek sub-county, was closed in December last year. This was after the funder, Dr Suzzane Gazda from the US, wrote to the district that she could not continue financing it because the Government was not committed to taking it up.

By the time of its closing, there were 28 clients at the centre from Odek sub-county and Awere sub-county in Pader district.

Eseza Olanya, 72, from Olam village in Omoro district, is nursing her grandson, Brian Ocaya, 18.

Olanya says Ocaya contracted the disease in 2007 and due to his getting frequent seizures, she was forced to take him to Hope for Humans Care Centre in Odek for proper care.

"My grandson had improved, but since the closure of the centre, his condition is worsening," she said.

Lucy Acayo, 35, has virtually lost hope regarding her only two children – Grace Aciro, 15 and Walter Ochora, 14.

The double tragedy started about seven years ago. Just like Olanya, her only hope and relief had come through the rehabilitation centre.



Children affected by the disease attending a meeting at Odek Health Centre III in Omoro district. Photos by Arnest Tumwesige

There are 254 clients in Odek sub-county. Eighteen children have died since 2012.

Since the closing of the centre, which provided the children with fortified foods, timely medication and formal education, two more patients have died.

Anna Apio, the acting health officer for Pader district, said there were 535 confirmed nodding disease cases in Awere sub-county, while over 220 of them were in dire need of fortified foods and medication.

MPs react

Gilbert Olanya, the MP for Kilak South in Amuru district, said the findings

by the Acholi Parliamentary Group will be presented in Parliament to compel the Government to support the districts that have the affected children.

"It is surprising that government is acting like nothing is wrong. We want to show the world that children have been left to die yet money is being wasted on 'useless things,'" he said.

Peter Okot, the MP for Tochi County in Omoro district, said the testimonies from parents that their children had recovered is an indicator that the centre should be reopened with full funding to avoid relapses.

"We have many non-governmental organisations in Uganda, but they

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY

Santa Aciro
Our first prayer is that the Government comes to our rescue. While we have not registered new cases, it is possible that all these affected children will die due to lack of medication and poor nutrition.



Richard Otto
We have 53 cases in Ayom village, of which 10 girls have been raped. It is hard to trace the boys who get them pregnant, the Police should come to our rescue.



have not come to the rescue of these children. They have concentrated on the refugees and yet the situation here does not require a lot," Lucy Acii, the MP for Aruu North County, said.

Pader district leaders said they have received money from the central government only twice. First in 2015 with an allocation of sh45m, followed by sh35m in June 2016.

Omoro recently received sh12m after the chairperson made a request to the ministry. All the money was spent on vehicle repairs, outreaches and referrals.



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