

North West

Ngie Taken Hostage By Epilepsy

Ngie (Momo) - The highly-enclaved Ngie area in Momo Division easily gets away with another ugly side as the kaisa of epilepsy in the North West Province. The 50 kilometre stretch of rugged road that separates Bamenda from Ngie makes matters worse with only four-wheel Drive cars prescribed for anything but comfortable journey. Anything short results in passengers trekking and pushing the cars on the hilly stretches. On the spot in Ngie, the land of His Highness Fon Atughat epileptic endemic is largely blamed on ill will, supernatural forces and witchcraft.

It was a horrible scene recently when a team of Canadian Researchers (Irene Elliott and Mary Douglas), went sizing up the magnitude of the disease that has inflicted scars on virtually all the households in Ngie. Some of the patients collapsed at regular intervals, within two hours about 10 people went epileptic.

According to a research carried out by the Association of Orphans and the Disabled, ASODI, Teze Ngie, out of a population of about 55000 to 60000, more than 40 percent of the people of Ngie Sub Division are affected with epilepsy. The research also reveals that the situation in Ngie appears to be an early childhood onset seizure disorder which lasts into adult hood.

Against this backdrop, the researchers, in collaboration with ASODI were in some villages in Ngie to get first hand information on the situation. After wor-

king with epilepsy patients for more than 20 years, Irene Elliott, a nurse could, not be indifferent with the high number of epileptic patients she saw.

For the past few years, ASODI headed by Ambanibe Jerome Akeneck, a state registered nurse has assembled over 600 patients in Ngie. Available documents also reveal that, there are 300 epileptic patients in Njikwa Sub Division, 400 in Widikum, 150 in Mbengwi Central. This number represents only a fraction of the number of cases as the increase rate stands at five to 10 new cases per month. So far, ASODI in collaboration with the Canadian researchers has been supplying Phenobarbital to those patients in Momo Division. The drug is said to help calm the seizures. Consequently, a significant number of patients in Ngie were found to be Phenobarbital responsive.

Although there are yet to be established causes, Irene Elliott explained that the case in Ngie can be attributed to tape worms from pigs. She said pork is a host of tape worms and when poorly cooked the worm stays alive and when consumed, it gets to the brain and provokes electrical movements which lead to seizures. However, as a preventive measure, she advised the people of Ngie to prepare pork for at least two hours before consumption, keep pig fences far away from homes and abide by good hygiene rules.

According to the District head of the Mbengwi District Hospital, Dr Henry

Ajabmoh, more than 41 percent of children born under poor conditions and traditional birth Attendant (TBA) in Ngie are epileptic. He said this is because most of the children born under such conditions suffer from bad breathing.

Regina LIENGU
ETAKA



Canadian Researcher in communion with some epilepsy patients in Teze village, Ngie Sub Division.