

## **NODDING SYNDROME: AN ILLNESS IN THE MAKING**

A film by Karin van Bommel & Evert Aalten  
Scandal Studios, 2017 (38 min.)

Nodding syndrome is a poorly understood condition characterized by repetitive involuntary nodding of the head, mental retardation and stunted growth, which mainly affects children aged five to fifteen years old. An estimated 10,000 children are affected in Uganda, South Sudan and in Tanzania. Children living under the poorest conditions seem most susceptible to the syndrome and the majority of affected families experienced food shortages and have a history of internal displacement.

In northern Uganda, symptoms were first noticed around 1998 during the war between Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government. In local discourse, nodding syndrome is linked to central social issues, such as conflict, poverty and frustrations over neglect. Little is known about the prognosis, but it is thought to be very debilitating both physically and mentally. Up to now, cause and cure remain unclear.

This film documentary is based on fifteen months of anthropological fieldwork in northern Uganda and shows the complexity of nodding syndrome and the many different narratives, explanatory models and coping styles regarding this affliction. In attempting to understand what nodding syndrome is and how it is experienced, we should look at the context in which meaning making takes place.



**WATCH HERE:**  
[www.vimeo.com/noddingsyndrome/docu](http://www.vimeo.com/noddingsyndrome/docu)