

The Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) has stepped up vigilance at all border points, following weeks of outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in neighboring Uganda.

Uganda health authorities declared the outbreak of Ebola disease on September 20, caused by Sudan virus. Following laboratory confirmation of a patient from Mubende district, the epicenter in central Uganda.

So far, the disease has claimed seven lives including a Tanzanian doctor working in Uganda and 65 health workers.

This is the first Ebola disease outbreak caused by Sudan virus (SUDV) in Uganda since 2012, but Rwanda has not suffered a single Ebola case in the past.

According to Rwanda's Health Ministry through RBC, healthcare workers dressed in protective gear at Kagitumba and Gatuna border are measuring temperatures of travelers and noting down their passages and tracker drivers histories to prevent cross-border infections.

Passengers entering Rwanda from Uganda are undergoing a screening exercise at the different points of entry to prevent the spread of the disease.

RBC says that all passengers including track drivers are being screened at the border point of entry, taking their temperatures to prevent the disease from spreading in Rwanda.

Health workers at the Gatuna and Kagitumba borders are taking temperatures of travellers and taking down their travel histories as Kigali seeks to prevent cross-border infections.

According to RBC, when passengers arrive at the border, a health task force takes the temperature, in addition to other Ebola symptoms like diarrhea, headache, and vomiting, sore throat as well as eventually bleeding," RBC said.

In case a traveler's temperature is above 38. Degrees Celsius, he or she is put in a holding room at the border for some time before the test process is repeated.

If the temperature remains the same after other measures, that passage is quarantined at the holding room before he or she is transferred to the hospital.

“We have special rooms at the border points with the required medical equipment and bed capacity to accommodate all the travelers on a day.” RBC noted.

Rwanda has vaccinated over 200,000 people against Ebola, mostly in the Western Province according to data from the health ministry.

More than 200-300 travelers cross at border points from Uganda every day; RBC adds that they have the capacity to screen passengers. However, they noted that, if a passenger is coming from epic center Mubende, they are quarantined for 21 days before they are allowed to proceed with their journey.

RBC further says, “All passengers have to fill a travelers surveillance form, which includes all details like passport and phone number, town of departure, length of stay as well as destination in Uganda”

Meanwhile other measures that Rwanda has put in place include sensitization and media awareness campaigns.

Some of the residents in Kayonza have urged relatives and friends going to Uganda to wait because the disease is spreading very fast.

“We hear that Ebola is affecting Ugandans, I believe it’s not safe to travel there now. As a Rwandan, I don’t know if the Ugandan government will take care of me incase am affected, it’s not like here in Rwanda where we get all the medical requirements,” said Seraphin Kayitesi.

Though Trinity Bus transport company manager at Kayonza district who prefers not to be named says that passengers are normally booking to travel to Uganda, there is no problem as long as they take precautionary measures while in Uganda.”

Meanwhile, RBC through its statement is advising the public to be aware of anyone who is showing symptoms to inform authorities or call the RBC call centre which is toll free number 114.

Experts have also said that one of the problems faced when it comes to screening travelers is that of illegal border crossing.