

By Malela Kassim and correspondent David Kisanga

DESPITE assurance by government authorities that visitors entering the country are screened to ensure that Ebola doesn't enter the country, it appears that at some entry points people cross the borders without being screened or anything of the sort.

However, some main entry points including airports have resorted to set up strict security in an attempt to detect people entering the country with the virus.

A week long survey by this

paper at Julius Nyerere International Airport and Kilimanjaro International Airport has established that the country is keen to fight the deadly disease.

The Guardian witnessed separate rooms for quarantine purposes set aside at the main airports, while the workers were busy checking visitors.

"We are well prepared to detect and fight the disease, as you are aware we work with different ministries including the Health and Social Welfare ministry to ensure that Ebola does not enter the country. On Thursday we quarantined two people whom we suspected to be Ebola victims ... but later on medical experts verified

that they were not suffering from the disease and were released from the hospital," said Tanzanian Civil Aviation Authority (TCAA) acting Managing Director, Suleiman Suleiman.

For good measure, the government has already installed thermo scanners to scan passengers at airports and other entry points before entering or leaving the country.

Some of the passengers who were interviewed called for additional measures to prevent the virus from spreading into the country by screening passengers arriving from countries with Ebola cases, particularly West

African countries.

Juma Ali who was arriving from Ethiopia said safety measures are crucial and should involve all responsible sectors.

Ebola symptoms include high fever, muscle pains, intense weakness, headache followed by vomiting, diarrhea, skin rashes and lung or kidney impairment.

Currently, Ebola which is caused by a virus is fairly spread in some parts of West Africa. Until August 6, a total of 1,779 people were reportedly found with the virus while at least 961 people (equal to 54 percent of the patients) have died.

Muhimbili National

Hospital in Dar es Salaam has set up a special ward for Ebola victims in case the disease enters the country. The ward is equipped with protective gears for health personnel. Temeke Referral Hospital has also done the same.

Kilimanjaro Region Chief Medical Officer, Mwiita Mwako told this paper that they have also set aside a special ward at every health centre and hospital ready in the region just in case because the region tends to receive lots of tourists from across the globe.

Mwako also established that the region already has all the necessary equipment and has trained all medical staff on

handling and combating the disease.

Kagera Regional Commissioner, Col Fabian Massawe underscored that Kagera is already on alert and well prepared to make sure that the disease does not enter the region.

He said they have sent medical experts to the borders of Rwanda and Uganda to screen all visitors entering the country.

He said immigration officers at the borders are alert and will make sure that no visitor enters the country without being screened by medical experts who are already well trained.

"We also have a special

ward for Ebola patients as well as protective gears, just in case," he added.

Despite these proclaimed efforts, it appears that there are no posters to create awareness among the people.

"Despite hearing about government's efforts, I am yet to see any visible measures as proclaimed by the government because currently people are crossing freely here at Rusumo boarder," said John Rwegasira, a resident of Ngara district, Kagera region.

Our reporter at Tunduma border in Mbeya region said business is usual at the boarder as people cross freely to and from Zambia with no screening whatsoever.

The situation is the same at Kasumulu border as people and passengers' buses cross with no screening.

On August 12, the government said it has set aside 1.8bn/- as part of its precautionary measures against the possible outbreak of the deadly disease.

However, there are no reported cases of the disease in any East or Central African countries of late.

On August 15, the government instructed regional administrative officers to set up clinical desks at all boarder points to test people entering the country in a bid to keep Ebola pandemic at bay.