

At least nine people have died, and more than 80 others are seriously ill in Northern Marsabit County, following an outbreak of an unknown disease.

A local administrator in the area has appealed for an urgent intervention to prevent further fatalities.

According to local media reports, most affected patients are reported to have exhibited flu-like symptoms, yellow eyes, swollen spleen and several headaches.

One patient is reported to have died at Kargi Health Centre, after exhibiting flu-like symptoms.

Medics however say visceral leishmaniasis – also known as kala-azar disease – cannot be ruled out.

Visceral leishmaniasis is characterized by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia. It can be fatal if left untreated in over 95% of cases, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

The disease was first reported two weeks ago and has continued to cause havoc in the region. Urgent virology tests and mass screening of residents have been called for by Chief Galoro to establish the exact cause of the deaths and to avert further fatalities.

The outbreak comes two months after the Kenya Medical Research Institute detected an invasive mosquito species in Laisamis and Saku areas of Marsabit county.