

## Now.. Kenya's Arid Turkana Can Battle Drought

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Salt Lake of Turkana & Nabuyatom Volcano  
Ironically, Kenya's southwest borders Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake.

### **BBC:**

A huge water source has been discovered in the arid Turkana region of northern Kenya which could supply the country for 70 years, the government says.

The discovery of two aquifers brings hope to the drought-hit region, tweeted Environment Minister Judi Wakhungu. They were found in the Turkana Basin and Lotikipi Basin using satellites and radar.

Last year, scientists released a map detailing the vast reservoirs which lie under much of Africa. Another aquifer was found in Namibia - the continent's driest country.

Turkana is one of the hottest, driest and poorest parts of the Nile Basin country of Kenya and was hit by a devastating drought last year.

Many of the region's inhabitants are nomadic herders, who are especially vulnerable to a lack of rain. Test drilling confirmed there was water under the ground.

Ironically, Kenya's southwest borders Lake Victoria, the world's second largest freshwater lake and the world's largest tropical lake.

The discovery of Turkana's new reservoirs was announced by Wakhungu at a meeting of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UENSCO.

"This newly found wealth of water opens a door to a more prosperous future for the people of Turkana and the nation as a whole. We must now work to further explore these resources responsibly and safeguard them for future generations," she said.

'Irrigation and industry benefits' The aquifers are said to hold some 250bn cubic meters of water. Wakhungu said Kenya currently uses about 3bn cubic meters a year.

"We're hoping with the two test boreholes, the water should be available within a month. The first priority is to supply water to the people of the area, who have always been water insecure."

Using the water for irrigation and industry would also be considered, she said. Massive oil deposits have also recently been discovered in Turkana.

The BBC's Angela Ng'endo in the capital, Nairobi, says despite its burgeoning wealth, the region's inhabitants have always felt marginalized.

Abou Amani, UENSCO's Africa hydrologist, urged caution and said it was important not to "overexploit" the aquifers.

"We need to put in place a sound management system," he said. The head of the non-governmental organization Friends of Lake Turkana, Ikal Anglei, said the government also needed to engage more with local communities.

"Unfortunately they're not creating forums for us to engage with them," she said. "It is critical for governments to realize they don't... come up with programs without community ownership... and linking it to economic development."

According to UENSCO, about 17 million of Kenya's 41 million people lack access to safe water. Out of this, Muslims represent 11.2% of Kenya's population, where 60% of whom live in the historic Swahili "Coast Province" which oversees the Indian Ocean, comprising 50% only of the total population there.

That's while the upper provinces of the Somali NEP (North Eastern Province, aka Woqooyi Bari in the Somali language, and Kaskazini Mashariki in the Swahili language) which was occupied by Kenya during Shifta War (1963-1967) against Somalia, is the only region with Muslim majority and encompasses 10 percent of the country's 11% Muslims.