

Vital underground water found in arid north Kenya

By Faith Karimi , CNN

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Community members gather at a selected drilling site at Nawaitarong village Kenya in a photo provided by UNESCO.

COURTESY: UNESCO/Nairobi OFFICE

(CNN) -- Call it a watershed moment for Kenya.

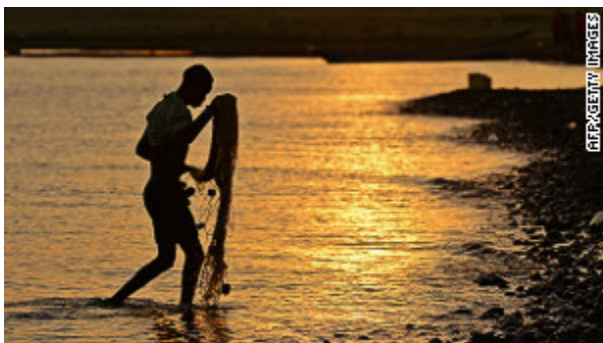
Scientists found massive underground water supplies in the arid northern region.

The discovery of the reserves could improve the lives of generations and halt long-running conflicts over natural resources.

The United Nations said it identified five aquifers in parched Turkana, two of which

have been verified.

"Two aquifers ... were identified using advanced satellite exploration technology," its cultural agency, UNESCO, said in a [statement Wednesday](#).



Saving Africa's Lake Turkana



Turkana's climate crisis

"Their existence was then confirmed by drilling conducted recently by UNESCO, but there is need for further studies to

adequately quantify the reserves and to assess the quality of the water," UNESCO said.

An additional three aquifers have been found in the same area, but have not been confirmed by drilling and will need further assessment, it said.

In a country where water is scarce, the revelation is crucial. Kenya has a population of about 41 million, with nearly 17

million lacking access to safe water, according to the United Nations.

More than half the population -- about 28 million -- lack adequate sanitation.

"The news about these water reserves comes at a time when reliable water supplies are highly needed," said Judi Wakhungu, the nation's cabinet secretary for the environment, water and natural resources.



Turkana's climate catastrophe

"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."

In addition to replenishing scarce water supplies in the nation, the underground resources will boost agriculture in the region, which has long battled arid conditions. The nation faces water insecurity exacerbated by erratic rainfall patterns, triggering battles for natural resources among various communities.

Deadly cattle raids and conflicts over grazing land are common in the area.

The underground supplies will also provide irrigation and livestock needs, drinking water, and help ward off malnutrition in the region.

The project between UNESCO and the Kenyan government was funded by Japan. Kenya will conduct more studies to determine the quantity and the quality of the water.

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