



Hotter homes and the race for electricity

Three-minute briefing

African climate planning needs to pay closer attention to the heat people experience indoors and overnight. Studies published this week in Cairo and Ethiopia bring those conditions into view. Their findings coincide with a global contest for electricity and industrial technology, raising a practical question: how can growing power systems serve new industry while keeping protection from heat affordable?

Cairo building simulations find that prolonged heat can drive cumulative indoor overheating more strongly than the peak outdoor temperature. Ethiopian station records report increasing warm extremes, including warm nights. These are different forms of evidence. Neither demonstrates the results of a cooling programme. They make the case for assessing actual rooms and testing improvements against local conditions.

Two further studies widen the geography. Compound drought-heatwave events can shift across the West African Sahel, with implications for alternative grazing areas. Long-term modelling projects more frequent extreme southward swings of a rain-bearing circulation over southern Africa under high emissions. These regional findings inform contingency planning and infrastructure appraisal, rather than local emergency instructions.

The International Energy Agency examines how electricity systems connect large data-centre customers. Such customers can support investment and spread costs, but speculative or delayed demand can leave unused assets to be paid for. The report also identifies trade-offs between cooling water and electricity. Separately, Europe selected 77 industrial projects for €3.4 billion of support from carbon-market revenue. Agreements, payments and delivery remain later stages.

Kenya's earlier data-centre proposals bring the connection bargain into national policy. Its energy regulator, electricity licensees, water and environmental authorities hold distinct responsibilities. County governments also have an opportunity in existing public buildings. A proposed ten-facility pilot would compare cooling improvements using room conditions, electricity use, maintenance and total cost, within approved budgets and procurement rules.

The conclusion would strengthen with measured retrofit performance, credible electricity demand and signed financial terms. The six readings explain what each source establishes, where its conclusions travel and which decisions follow.

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