EA RESEARCH BRIEF

Ecoclime Africa Climate Report: Mid-Year Edition 2026

Drought in the East, Floods in the South and West, Record Heat in the North

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EA Research

PUBLISHED BY

Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub

EA Research Brief RB-2026-001

August 2026

Mid-Year Edition, covering January to July 2026. The Annual Edition, covering the full calendar year, follows every January.

Publication Information

Title	Ecoclime Africa Climate Report: Mid-Year Edition 2026: Drought in the East, Floods in the South and West, Record Heat in the North
Author	Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub Research Team. EA Research
Publisher	Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub
First published	August 2026
Document number	EA Research Brief RB-2026-001
Suggested citation	Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub (2026). Ecoclime Africa Climate Report: Mid-Year Edition 2026 (EA Research Brief RB-2026-001).
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Abstract

Africa's climate reality in the first seven months of 2026 was not one story but four, unfolding simultaneously across the continent. In West Africa, severe flooding struck the Gulf of Guinea coast in June, killing at least 34 people in Ghana alone; a formal attribution study found the observed rainfall record makes such an event roughly five times more likely than in a cooler climate. In Southern Africa, a weak La Nina drove flooding across Mozambique, Eswatini, northeastern South Africa, and Zimbabwe from late December 2025 into January 2026 that killed more than 200 people, followed by two further cyclones, Fytia and Gezani, striking Madagascar and Mozambique in close succession; a separate attribution study found climate change roughly doubled the effect La Nina alone would have had on that rainfall's intensity. In East Africa, drought conditions running since September 2025 across Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia, and eastern Kenya had left 4.6 million people affected and displaced more than 135,000 in Somalia by early February 2026, with cereal prices at record highs and rising livestock deaths. In North Africa, a record-breaking heatwave in July pushed Tunisia to 49.7 degrees Celsius in Kairouan, breaking a historical record, while Morocco and Egypt each issued their own heat alerts earlier in the year, straining power grids across the sub-region. Behind these four events sit five structural pressures: heat exposure concentrated on workers with the least protection, an e-waste system still overwhelmingly informal and under-recycled, an infrastructure investment gap running tens of billions of dollars short every year, climate finance covering only a fraction of what adaptation requires, and early warning coverage that still fails to reach six in ten Africans. None of these gaps require new science to close.

Keywords: Africa; Ghana; 2026; flooding; drought; heatwave; attribution science; La Nina; Southern Africa; East Africa; North Africa; West Africa

Contents

1. Introduction

This is the Mid-Year Edition of the Ecoclime Africa Climate Report, covering January through July 2026. It is Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub's first published climate report, and opens a biannual reporting cycle: a Mid-Year Edition every August, an Annual Edition every January.

Section 3 covers verified events across West, Southern, East, and North Africa, each independently sourced. Section 4 sets out the structural pressures behind them.

2. Global Context: The First Half of 2026

Every month from January through June 2026 ranked among the warmest on record for its time of year. January 2026 was the fifth warmest January on record, with an average surface air temperature of 12.95 degrees Celsius, 0.51 degrees above the 1991 to 2020 average and 1.47 degrees above the pre-industrial level [1]. February 2026 was the fifth warmest February on record, at 1.49 degrees above pre-industrial [2]. May 2026 was the second warmest May globally across land and sea, and June 2026 was the second warmest June on record, with western Europe recording its warmest June ever and Europe as a whole its second warmest, alongside an intense heatwave across much of the continent [3].

> **KEY POINT**
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> Global sea surface temperature averaged 20.94 degrees Celsius across the first half of 2026, the second warmest opening six months on record, and June 2026 was the warmest June ever measured at 21.0 degrees Celsius [4].

By the end of June 2026, an estimated 82 percent of the global ocean was experiencing marine heatwave conditions, the second-largest extent on record after 2024, when roughly 83 percent of the ocean was affected [4]. The Mediterranean Sea was particularly extreme: 98 percent of it was affected by marine heatwaves, 80 percent at strong to extreme intensity, and its June average reached a record 24.3 degrees Celsius [4]. In the tropical Pacific, mean temperature matched the 2016 record at 26.91 degrees Celsius, with developing El Nino conditions noted for June [3][4]. No data reviewed for this edition covered the tropical Atlantic or Indian Ocean regions nearest to Africa specifically; that gap is noted, not assumed calm.

3. Extreme Events Across the Continent, January to July 2026

Four distinct climate events unfolded simultaneously across Africa in the first half of 2026: flooding in the west and south, drought in the east, record heat in the north. Each is reported below on its own independent source.

3.1 West Africa: The Gulf of Guinea Floods, June 2026

Severe flooding struck the Gulf of Guinea coast between 20 and 22 June. Intense, persistent rainfall hit Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, and Nigeria, with more than 140 millimeters falling in under 24 hours in several locations, overwhelming drainage systems and triggering extensive flash flooding [5].

KEY POINT

Ghana recorded its highest June rainfall since 1995 during this event, and at least 34 people died [5].

Cote d'Ivoire recorded 59 deaths from flooding since May 2026, and Togo reported five fatalities from the same event [5]. Nigeria's rainy season runs into October; its authorities had already flagged more than 1,200 communities across 33 states as high flood risk as of this event [6]. A formal attribution study found the observed rainfall record shows a 23 percent increase in the intensity of 3-day rainfall events since records began, making an event of this magnitude about five times more likely in today's climate than in a 1.4 degree cooler one. The same study's climate models showed a much smaller effect, about 4 percent, which the researchers attribute to limited model performance in this region [5].

3.2 Southern Africa: La Nina Floods and Two Cyclones, December 2025 to February 2026

A weak La Nina drove severe flooding across Mozambique, Eswatini, northeastern South Africa, and Zimbabwe from late December 2025 into January 2026, killing more than 200 people [7]. A formal attribution study of this event found that the weak La Nina phase alone made extreme 10-day rainfall roughly five times more likely and about 22 percent more intense, but that climate change added a larger effect on top of that, roughly double La Nina's own contribution, taking the total observed intensification of extreme rainfall spells to approximately 40 percent [7]. South Africa's National Disaster Management Center declared the flooding a national disaster on 18 January [8].

KEY POINT

In Mozambique alone, the December-January flooding affected over 75,000 people across six provinces, destroyed more than 70,000 homes, and damaged roughly 5,000 kilometers of roads, including the country's main highway [7].

Cyclones Fytia and Gezani struck Madagascar within ten days of each other in the following weeks, Gezani flattening most of the port city of Toamasina before moving on to compound Mozambique's already flooded coast [9]. A United Nations OCHA snapshot published in February 2026 recorded that, cumulatively, flooding and cyclone impacts across the sub-region had by then affected close to 1.9 million people, with Mozambique's own toll rising to roughly 723,000 people affected, over 171,000 houses and 229 health facilities damaged, and 717,000 hectares of farmland destroyed as the crisis continued into February; cholera outbreaks were also recorded in Zambia during this period [8]. This OCHA figure covers a wider window than the attribution study above and is reported separately from it.

3.3 East Africa: The Horn of Africa Drought

Drought conditions running since September 2025 gripped Somalia, southeastern Ethiopia, and eastern Kenya, driven by scarce rainfall and above-average temperatures; December 2025

temperatures exceeded the 1991 to 2020 average by more than 2 degrees Celsius across parts of northeastern Kenya, southern Ethiopia, and southwestern Somalia [10].

> **KEY POINT**
>
> By early February 2026, the drought had affected an estimated 4.6 million people and displaced more than 135,000 within Somalia alone, with worryingly low soil moisture, rising livestock deaths, and cereal prices at record highs [10].

Emergency-level food insecurity had already been documented across all three countries by January 2026 [10]. Forecasters gave only a roughly even chance, about 45 percent, of wetter-than-normal conditions returning across most of the Greater Horn of Africa for the March to May 2026 rainy season [11].

3.4 North Africa: Record Heat and Power Strain, July 2026

An exceptionally intense heatwave swept North Africa in July 2026. Tunisia recorded its most extreme readings: 49.7 degrees Celsius in the central governorate of Kairouan, breaking a previous record of 49.2 degrees, and 48.6 degrees in the northeastern governorate of Zaghouan, breaking a prior high of 48 degrees [12]. Morocco issued an orange-level heat alert in late May, with temperatures forecast to reach 44 degrees Celsius in parts of the country, and Egypt recorded 40 to 45 degrees Celsius across northern and southern governorates in its own earlier heat episode [13].

The sustained heat strained infrastructure directly: Tunisia and Libya both experienced frequent, prolonged power cuts as electricity grids struggled to meet peak cooling demand [13]. A claim describing North Africa as the continent's fastest-warming sub-region appears in secondary coverage; the underlying primary study was inaccessible (paywalled) and this figure is reported as attributed, not independently confirmed [14].

4. The Structural Pressures Behind These Events

Five pressures recur across all four events in Section 3, and each is independently documented.

4.1 Heat exposure

Africa has the world's highest occupational heat exposure: 92.9 percent of the region's workforce is exposed to excessive heat on the job, and Africa records the greatest share of occupational injuries attributable to excessive heat of any world region, 7.2 percent of all occupational injuries. Roughly 85 percent of employment across Africa is informal, without regulated hours or health cover [15].

4.2 Materials and waste

Only about 1 percent of e-waste generated across Africa is formally, safely recycled, and e-waste is one of the fastest-growing waste streams globally, at 62 million tonnes a year worldwide [16].

4.3 Infrastructure

Africa's infrastructure investment need runs at 130 to 180 billion dollars a year, against an actual annual shortfall of 68 to 108 billion dollars, driven largely by deficits in water and sanitation, electricity supply, and transport access [17].

4.4 Climate finance

Africa needs an estimated 277 to 300 billion dollars a year for climate adaptation and mitigation combined. It receives about 30 billion dollars a year, roughly a tenth of that figure [18].

4.5 Early warning coverage

Six out of every ten people in Africa are not covered by any early warning system, the lowest coverage of any world region [19].

> **KEY POINT**
>
> Section 3's four events show how these pressures compound in practice: flood-prone coastal cities with under-invested drainage, a drought-hit region without early warning reach to match the scale of the emergency, a heatwave straining power infrastructure already under strain before the temperature records fell.

5. Outlook for the Rest of 2026

West Africa's rainy season continues into the third quarter for several of the countries affected by the June flooding, with Nigeria's season running into October [6]. East Africa's drought outlook depended, at the time of the most recent forecast cited here, on a rainy season with only a roughly even chance of returning to normal [11]. Developing El Nino conditions in the tropical Pacific, noted for June 2026, bear watching over the second half of the year, given the documented historical link between El Nino and rainfall anomalies in parts of Africa [3].

The Annual Edition for 2026 is due January 2027.

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About Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub

Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub is a climate and sustainability education and advocacy initiative focused on Ghana and West Africa, working to foster a climate-literate society across the continent through accessible, practical, action-driven education. Learn more at the Hub's LinkedIn page, Ecoclime Africa Learning Hub.