



Centre for Social Concern

CFSC-RURAL BASIC NEEDS BASKETS: TAs MMBELWA(MZ), TAMBALA(DZ), MASEYA(CK), KANYENDA(KK)

Ideal Food Cost

During the month of March 2023, the cost of ideal food items that make up to 1800 kilocalories was highest at K125,900 in TA Mmbelwa as compared to other areas, while TA Maseya in Chikwawa was the lowest at K94,190. This means that in March, in an ideal situation, a household in Mzimba was supposed to have K125,900 to buy food items which could have provided minimum kilocalories of 1800 but the average monthly income of K80,570 for Mmbelwa was not enough to achieve this.

The Cost of Living

The cost of living, a summation of ideal food and nonfood costs, was highest (K198,025) in TA Kanyenda in Nkhotakota and lowest in Chikwawa (K169,490). This means that Nkhotakota households were supposed to have K198,025 to buy both food and non-food items, however, they only managed to get K80,570 from different sources of income.

Coping mechanism

During the lean period, when most households do not have enough food, they follow some coping mechanisms to ensure their survival. TA Maseya had the largest number of households that abandoned their fields to work in other people's fields as casual labour in return for cash or food while only 10% of households from TA Mmbelwa in Mzimba worked in other people's fields as one of the coping mechanism for survival. 51% of the households in TA Tambala in Dedza reduced portions of the meals in order for their food to last longer. It has also been recorded that 50% of households in TA Tambala reduced the number of meals per day to allow food reserves to take more days. It is in the same TA Tambala area where 41% of the households reduced adult consumption of food just to give room for the children to have enough food.

Kilocalorie intake

Kilo-calorie(energy) intake is one of the indicators of household food security. Kilo-calorie intake of less than the minimum requirement of 1800 per person per day, as per the UN's FAO recommendation, is an indicator that the household is food insecure. From the data collected, households from TA Mmbelwa in Mzimba and TA Kanyenda in Nkhotakota have consumed enough kilocalories in the first quarter of 2023. However, households from both TA Tambala in Dedza and TA Maseya did not consume enough food that could have given them a minimum of 1800 Kcal. TA Tambala and TA Maseya got 1545 and 1782 Kcal respectively.

Household food insecurity mainly affects pregnant and breastfeeding women and the under-five children. Malawi experiences high percentages of malnutrition and this greatly affects the economy of the country. The UN joint news release of 2015 called *The Cost of Hunger in Africa: The Social and Economic Impact of Child Undernutrition in Malawi* report shows that the country loses significant sums of money each year as a result of child undernutrition through increased healthcare costs, additional burdens to the education system and lower productivity by its workforce.

Particularly detrimental are the consequences of stunting (low height for age) occurs when children miss out on critical nutrients – including proteins, vitamins and minerals — while in the womb and in the first two years of life. People affected by stunting face lifelong consequences starting in childhood such as frequent illness, poor school performance, having to repeat classes or dropping out altogether, and having low productivity at work.

Adequate nutrition is critical for one's physical and intellectual development and work productivity. It is, therefore, an integral element of socioeconomic development. It is in this context that the Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) appeals to the government to be determined to channel adequate resources towards food and nutrition interventions and strengthen institutional and human capacity for the effective delivery of food and nutrition services.

As an organization that looks at the socio-economic welfare of Malawians, CfSC suggests that government should critically consider the following strategies in order for Malawi to achieve sustainable food security both at the national and the household level.

- i. Collaborate with estates to utilize idle land for maize production. Previously, there was maximum utilization of press agriculture estates to grow maize which was also meant for the strategic grain reserves. The country could hardly run out of maize in the silos and maize was found in every ADMARC depot.
- ii. Contracting private companies like ILLOVO to use part of their estate to grow maize under irrigation farming. This can improve food security at the national level.

- iii. Passing of a Right to Food bill in parliament. This is a very important bill which when passed in parliament and accented into law, will help Malawians to claim their right to food. Reduction of post-harvest food losses both in the field and in storage. We have been hearing of maize rotting in national storage facilities while Malawians are suffering from hunger.
- iv. Parliament should allocate enough resources to ADMARC and ensure that the institution has resources during the harvest period.
- v. There should also be an awareness creation among the general population in order for people to diversify their food preferences. This will help people to eat different types of food and thereby facilitate an adequate intake of calories by individuals which will in return reduce malnutrition.

COST OF FOOD ITEMS FOR A FAMILY OF SIX

IDEAL FOOD ITEMS	WEIGHT	TA MMBELWA (MZIMBA)		TA KANYENDA (NKHOTAKOTA)		TA TAMBALA (DEDZA)		TA MASEYA (CHIKWAWA)	
		UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
Maize	20kg	550	11000	600	12000	700	14000	600	12000
Rice	10kg	2400	24000	1500	15000	1600	16000	700	7000
Sugar	3kg	1700	5100	1500	4500	1600	4800	1600	4800
Beans	7kg	2000	14000	1500	10500	1200	8400	1700	11900
Eggs	40eggs	150	6000	170	6800	160	6400	160	6400
Goat meat	5kg	4000	20000	4000	20000	3000	15000	3000	15000
Tomato	20	1000	20000	800	16000	700	14000	800	16000
Mustard	15kg	380	5700	615	9225	522	7830	256	3840
Cooking oil	3litres	4000	12000	3500	10500	3000	9000	3000	9000
Bananas	150	50	7500	100	15000	100	15000	50	7500
Salt	1kg	600	600	700	700	700	700	750	750
Kilocalories (Kcal)-FAO	Approx. 1800		125,900		120,225		111,130		94,190

AVERAGE KILO-CALORIE INTAKE PER PERSON PER DAY

TRADITIONAL AREA	DISTRICT	ACTUAL AVERAGE KILO CALORIE INTAKE
Mmbelwa	Mzimba	2145
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	1978
Tambala	Dedza	1545
Maseya	Chikwawa	1782

IDEAL COST OF NON-FOOD ITEMS

ITEM	IDEAL	TA MMBELWA		TA KANYENDA		TA TAMBALA		TA MASEYA	
		UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
Butex	4	850	3,400	1200	4,800	1000	4,000	1100	4,400
Nirma	15	400	6,000	350	5,250	400	6,000	400	6,000
Clere	3	800	2,400	700	2,100	850	2,550	800	2,400
Glycerin	3	800	2,400	600	1,800	600	1,800	700	2,100
Body care	1	2,500	2,500	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2500	2,500
Airtime	1	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500
Phone Charging	10	200	2,000	200	2,000	100	1,000	100	1,000
Charcoal	2	3,000	6,000	8,000	16,000	7000	14,000	6000	12,000
Batteries	9	450	4,050	350	3,150	400	3,600	400	3,600
Matches	9	100	900	100	900	100	900	100	900
Kukonola	5	700	3,500	600	3,000	600	3,000	700	3,500
Milling	5	700	3,500	600	3,000	600	3,000	700	3,500
Bicycles	1	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900	2,900
TOTALS			44,050		51,800		49,650		49,300

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME

INCOME SOURCE	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward from February	9470	7850	4150	7390
Casual labour	4600	39600	6495	20000
Small business	12800	7270	2700	38930
Loans from VSL	0	500	0	15450
Loans from others	16000	8600	750	0
Usury/Katapila	0	12500	0	25750
Crop sales	650	4250	3807.5	18120
Livestock sales	7050	200	4985	0
Remittances	30000	15500	4675	1400
Wage Labour	0	0	0	400
Forest products	0	2050	12290	3170
Selling planks	0	0	0	0
Firewood for selling	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	80,570	98,320	39,853	130,610

ACTUAL NON-FOOD ITEMS EXPENDITURE

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Paraffin	0	0	0	1590
Matches	0	510	240	300
Batteries	80	1510	112.5	930
Torches	0	400	0	195
Firewood	0	190	0	0
Ufresh	1270	4900	1180	4410
Nirma	0	0	0	0
Azam	0	0	0	0
Lifebouy	1090	0	1030	0
Butex	0	0	0	0
Boom	0	0	0	0
Geisha	0	0	0	0
Protex	0	3780	0	4945
Clere	1065	990	1065	1655
Vaseline	0	0	0	0
Glycerine	0	0	0	0
Bodycare	0	0	145	0
Mamascare	0	0	0	0
Milling	1500	2180	1857.5	845
School	1460	7500	12790	7080
Medication	1890	2470	2500	1920
Transport	1700	7850	400	1000
Church Offering	290	1400	250	70
Community contribution	0	900	0	170
TOTAL	10,345	34,580	21,570	25,110

THE COST OF LIVING

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Matches				
Kcal	2667	2539	1545	2165
Ideal Food Cost	125,900	120,225	111,130	94,190
Ideal Non Food Cost	44,050	51,800	49,650	49,300
School Expenses	26,000	26,000	26,000	26,000
Cost of Living	195,950	198,025	186,780	169,490
Average Monthly Income	80,570	98,320	39,853	130,610

TOTAL CROP PRODUCTION IN KG BETEWEEN JANUARY AND MARCH 2023

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Maize	0	4	0	0
Rice	0	0	0	0
Cassava	0	0	0	0
Beans	0	0	0	0
Soya	0	0	0	0
Groundnuts	0	0	0	0
Sweet potatoes	0	0	0	0

COPING MECHANISMS

	Type of Coping Mechanisms followed	Mmbelwa(MZ) % households	Kanyenda(KK) % households	Tambala(DZ) % households	Maseya(CK) % households
1	working in other people's fields leaving their gardens unattended	20	60	30	80
2	Selling household assets	0	10	0	20
3	Cooking grain meant for seed	0	40	5	20
4	Reducing portions at meal times	20	50	50.5	30
5	Reducing number of meals per day	0	40	50	30
6	Skipping the entire day without eating	0	20	0.5	10
7	Reducing adult consumption so children can have something to eat	10	20	40.5	20
8	Relying on less expensive or less preferred types of food	0	0	0	20
9	Cutting down fruit trees and sale for firewood	0	10	0	10
10	Gathering unusual types or amounts of wild food/fruit	0	0	0	20
11	Uncontrolled cutting down of trees for sale as firewood or charcoal	0	0	0	20
12	School children staying at home	10	20	0	20
13	Breaking up of marriages	0	0	0	20
14	Abandoning household plots to become tenants in estates	0	0	0	20
15	Getting Usury	0	0	0.5	10

Exchange Rate: 1USD = K1,036.18. Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/>

The Social Conditions Research Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of March 2023 in TAs

Mmbelwa, in Mzimba; Kanyenda in Nkhotakota; Tambala in Dedza and Maseya in Chikwawa.

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