



**Centre for Social Concern**

**CFSC-RURAL BASIC NEEDS BASKET PROJECT: TAS MMBELWA (MZ), TAMBALA (DZ),  
MASAYA (CK), KANYENDA (KK)**

**Ideal Food Cost**

During the month of June 2023, the cost of ideal food items that make up to 1800 kilocalories was highest at MK135,845 in TA Kanyenda as compared to other areas, while TA Tambala in Dedza was the lowest at MK98,475. This means that in June, in an ideal situation, a household in TA Kanyenda was supposed to have MK135,845 to buy food items which could have provided minimum kilocalories of 1800; but the average monthly income of MK132,425 alone for TA Kanyenda was not enough to achieve this as well as to spend on other basic items.

**The Cost of Living**

The cost of living, a summation of ideal food and non-food costs, was highest (MK213,795) in TA Kanyenda in Nkhotakota and lowest in Dedza (MK174,125). This means that Nkhotakota households were supposed to have MK213,795 to buy both food and non-food items. However, they only managed to get MK132,425 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 Tambala in Dedza had the largest number of households (60%) that abandoned their fields to work in other people's fields as casual labour in return for cash or food; while only 20% of households from TA Maseya in Chikwawa worked in other people's fields as one of the coping mechanism for survival. 60% 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 40% 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 30% 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, indicates that the household is food insecure. From the data collected, households from TA Kanyenda in Nkhoswezi, TA M'mbelwa in Mzimba, and TA Maseya in Chikwawa have consumed enough kilocalories (2279, 2210 and 1986 respectively) in the second quarter of 2023. However, households from TA Tambala in Dedza did not consume enough food that could have given them a minimum of 1800 Kcal. TA Tambala only got 1785 kilocalories.

## **THE HIGH COST OF LIVING AND LOW KILOCALORIE (ENERGY FROM FOOD CONSUMPTION) INTAKE IN RURAL AREAS OF MALAWI CAN HAVE A RANGE OF NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON THE POPULATION, INCLUDING:**

1. **Poverty and Financial Strain:** High costs for basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare can push rural families deeper into poverty and financial insecurity, making it difficult for them to meet their basic needs and improve their quality of life.
2. **Limited Access to Education:** High costs can prevent families from sending their children to school or accessing higher education. This perpetuates a cycle of limited opportunities and lower human capital development in rural areas.
3. **Healthcare Access:** High healthcare costs can discourage individuals from seeking medical treatment, leading to inadequate health outcomes. This can contribute to the spread of preventable diseases and reduce overall well-being.
4. **Limited Economic Opportunities:** High costs can discourage investment in rural businesses and limit job opportunities, resulting in fewer income-generating activities and reduced economic growth.
5. **Agricultural Challenges:** Agriculture is a crucial sector in Malawi's rural areas. High costs of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and tools can hamper productivity and limit the potential for increased agricultural output.
6. **Migration:** The high cost of living can drive rural residents to migrate to urban areas or even other countries in search of better economic opportunities, leading to a loss of human capital and potential stagnation of rural communities.

Mitigating the high cost of living for rural people in Malawi requires a multifaceted approach involving government policies, community initiatives, individual initiatives, and development projects including the private sector or organizations such as Centre for Social Concern itself. Some potential strategies include:

1. **Subsidies and Social Safety Nets:** Governments can provide targeted subsidies for essential goods and services like food, fuel, and healthcare to alleviate the burden on rural households. Implementing social safety net programs can also provide direct financial assistance to vulnerable populations.
2. **Investment in Infrastructure:** Improving transportation, energy, and communication infrastructure can reduce the cost of goods and services delivery to rural areas, making them more accessible and affordable.

3. **Agricultural Support:** Providing subsidized agricultural inputs, improved farming techniques, and market access can enhance agricultural productivity and income for rural farmers.
4. **Education and Skills Development:** Promoting education and vocational training programs in rural areas can empower individuals with skills that lead to better employment opportunities, reducing poverty and increasing economic diversification. Training on Community Action for Household Economic, Food and Nutrition Security, can help to mitigate the high cost of living.
5. **Healthcare Access:** Expanding access to affordable healthcare services and medications can improve health outcomes and reduce the financial burden of medical expenses.
6. **Local Economic Development:** Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting the growth of small businesses in rural communities can create jobs and economic opportunities, reducing reliance on costly external goods.
7. **Sustainable Resource Management:** Promoting sustainable agricultural and environmental practices can help rural communities better manage their resources, reduce production costs, and improve resilience to economic shocks.
8. **Community Development:** Encouraging community-based initiatives and cooperatives can help rural residents pool resources, share knowledge, and collectively address challenges related to the high cost of living.
9. **Technology and Innovation:** Introducing appropriate technologies and innovative solutions can improve productivity, lower costs, and create new income streams in rural areas.
10. **Policy Coordination and Implementation:** Governments should work in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and local communities to design and implement effective policies that address the root causes of high living costs in rural areas.

It's important to note that the effectiveness of these strategies can depend on various factors, including local context, political will, and available resources. A holistic and context-specific approach is essential to effectively mitigate the high cost of living for rural people in Malawi.

Low-calorie intake in rural areas of Malawi can have serious health and socio-economic consequences for the population. Malnutrition, particularly in the form of undernutrition, is a significant concern. Here are some of the effects and potential ways to mitigate the issue:

#### **Effects of Low-Calorie Intake:**

1. **Stunted Growth and Development:** Insufficient calorie intake, especially in children, can lead to stunted growth and impaired physical and cognitive development.
2. **Weakened Immune System:** Lack of adequate nutrition weakens the immune system, making individuals more susceptible to infections and diseases.
3. **Increased Mortality Rates:** Malnutrition can increase the risk of mortality, particularly among children, pregnant women, and the elderly.
4. **Poor Cognitive Function:** Insufficient calories can lead to impaired cognitive function, affecting learning abilities and future economic prospects.

5. **Decreased Productivity:** Low energy levels and poor health can lead to reduced productivity in agricultural and other labor-intensive activities, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.
6. **Maternal and Child Health Issues:** Low-calorie intake during pregnancy can result in complications for both mothers and their newborns, contributing to maternal and child mortality and morbidity.

**Mitigation Strategies:**

1. **Promoting Nutrient-Dense Foods:** Encourage the consumption of nutrient-rich foods, including vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, and lean proteins, to ensure a balanced and diverse diet.
2. **Agricultural Diversification:** Support efforts to diversify agricultural production to ensure a variety of nutritious foods are available, addressing both calorie and nutrient deficiencies.
3. **Nutrition Education:** Implement nutrition education programs to raise awareness about the importance of a balanced diet and the nutritional needs of different age groups, particularly targeting mothers and caregivers.
4. **Food Fortification:** Fortify staple foods with essential vitamins and minerals to improve their nutritional value and address deficiencies.
5. **Community Gardens:** Establish community gardens to promote local production of nutritious foods and improve access to fresh produce.
6. **Income Generation:** Create income-generating opportunities to enhance household purchasing power, allowing families to afford a wider range of nutritious foods.
7. **Social Safety Nets:** Implement social safety net programs that provide targeted assistance to vulnerable populations, ensuring access to food during times of economic hardship.
8. **Access to Clean Water and Sanitation:** Improve access to clean drinking water and sanitation facilities to prevent waterborne diseases and enhance overall health.
9. **Maternal and Child Health Programs:** Strengthen maternal and child health programs, including antenatal care and breastfeeding support, to improve the nutritional status of pregnant women and young children.
10. **Capacity Building:** Train healthcare workers and community members to identify and manage malnutrition, and provide appropriate care and support.
11. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Collaborate with local communities, NGOs, international organizations, and government agencies to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing low-calorie intake and malnutrition.
12. **Policy and Advocacy:** Advocate for policies that prioritize nutrition, including food security, agriculture, health, and education policies.

Addressing low-calorie intake in Malawi's rural areas requires a holistic approach that combines nutrition, healthcare, agriculture, and socioeconomic development efforts. By implementing a combination of these strategies, it is possible to mitigate the effects of low-calorie intake and improve the overall well-being of rural populations in Malawi.

**COST OF IDEAL FOOD ITEMS FOR A FAMILY OF SIX FOR THE MONTH OF JUNE 2023**

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	K450	<b>K9000</b>	K400	<b>8000</b>	K400	<b>K8000</b>	K660	<b>13200</b>
Rice	10kg	K2,000	<b>K20000</b>	K1700	<b>17000</b>	K2,000	<b>K20000</b>	K1200	<b>12000</b>
Sugar	3kg	K1,500	<b>K4500</b>	K1700	<b>5100</b>	K1,500	<b>K4500</b>	K1500	<b>4500</b>
Beans	7kg	K2,000	<b>K14000</b>	K1700	<b>11900</b>	K800	<b>K5600</b>	K1700	<b>11900</b>
Eggs	40eggs	K200	<b>K8000</b>	K200	<b>8000</b>	K200	<b>K8000</b>	K200	<b>8000</b>
Goat meat	5kg	K4,000	<b>K20000</b>	K4000	<b>20000</b>	K4,000	<b>K20000</b>	K3500	<b>17500</b>
Tomato	20	K1,000	<b>K20000</b>	K1600	<b>32000</b>	K400	<b>K8000</b>	K400	<b>8000</b>
Mustard	15kg	K308	<b>K4620</b>	K513	<b>7695</b>	K385	<b>K5775</b>	K400	<b>6000</b>
Cooking oil	3litres	K3,500	<b>K10500</b>	K3500	<b>10500</b>	K3500	<b>K10500</b>	K3500	<b>10500</b>
Bananas	150	K100	<b>K15000</b>	K100	<b>15000</b>	K50	<b>K7500</b>	K50	<b>7500</b>
Salt	1kg	K600	<b>K600</b>	K650	<b>650</b>	K600	<b>K600</b>	K600	<b>600</b>
Kilocalories (Kcal)-FAO	Approx. <b>1800</b>		<b>K126,220</b>		<b>K135,845</b>		<b>K98,475</b>		<b>K99,700</b>

**AVERAGE KILO-CALORIE INTAKE PER PERSON PER DAY FOR JUNE 2023**

TRADITIONAL AREA	DISTRICT	ACTUAL AVERAGE KILO CALORIE INTAKE
Mmbelwa	Mzimba	2210
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	2279
Tambala	Dedza	1785
Maseya	Chikwawa	1986

**IDEAL COST OF NON-FOOD ITEMS FOR JUNE 2023**

ITEM	IDEAL	TA MMBELWA		TA KANYENDA		TA TAMBALA		TA MASEYA	
		UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
Butex	4	K1200	<b>K4800</b>	K1200	<b>K4800</b>	K1000	<b>K4,000</b>	K1100	<b>4,400</b>
Nirma	15	K400	<b>K6000</b>	K350	<b>K5250</b>	K400	<b>K6,000</b>	K400	<b>6,000</b>
Clere	3	K500	<b>K1500</b>	K800	<b>K2400</b>	K850	<b>K2,550</b>	K800	<b>2,400</b>
Glycerin	3	K500	<b>K1500</b>	K700	<b>K2100</b>	K600	<b>K1,800</b>	K700	<b>2,100</b>
Body care	1	K1500	<b>K1500</b>	K1500	<b>K1500</b>	K2,400	<b>K2,400</b>	K2500	<b>2,500</b>
Airtime	1	K4,500	<b>K4500</b>	K4,500	<b>K4,500</b>	K4,500	<b>K4,500</b>	K4,500	<b>4,500</b>
Phone Charging	10	K300	<b>K3000</b>	K100	<b>K1000</b>	K100	<b>K1,000</b>	K100	<b>1,000</b>
Charcoal	2	K2500	<b>K5000</b>	K9000	<b>K18000</b>	K7000	<b>K14,000</b>	K6000	<b>12,000</b>
Batteries	9	K600	<b>K5400</b>	K400	<b>K3600</b>	K400	<b>K3,600</b>	K400	<b>3,600</b>
Matches	9	K100	<b>K900</b>	K100	<b>K900</b>	K100	<b>K900</b>	K100	<b>900</b>
Kukonola	5	K1000	<b>K5000</b>	K500	<b>K2500</b>	K600	<b>K3,000</b>	K700	<b>3,500</b>
Milling	5	K1000	<b>K5000</b>	K500	<b>K2500</b>	K600	<b>K3,000</b>	K700	<b>3,500</b>
Bicycles	1	2,900	<b>K2900</b>	2,900	<b>K2,900</b>	K2,900	<b>K2,900</b>	K2,900	<b>2,900</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>K47,000</b>		<b>K51,950</b>		<b>K49,650</b>		<b>49,300</b>

**AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME**

<b>INCOME SOURCE</b>	<b>TA M'MBELWA</b>	<b>TA KANYENDA</b>	<b>TA TAMBALA</b>	<b>TA MASEYA</b>
<b>Cash Brought Forward from February</b>	15050	8100	2610	11890
Casual labour	11854.3	20480	1580	21650
Small business	47410	23995	3850	23170
Loans from VSL	0	0	0	0
Loans from others	0	11000	1000	0
Usury/Katapila	0	19000	0	1200
Crop sales	22855	48800	16530	32900
Livestock sales	2200	0	300	6500
Remittances	15600	250	3000	0
Wage Labour	0	0	0	4500
Forest products	8000	800	9520	700
Selling planks	0	0	0	0
Firewood for selling	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>122,969</b>	<b>132,425</b>	<b>38,390</b>	<b>102,510</b>

**THE COST OF LIVING (Ideal food cost + Ideal nonfood cost, including average school expenses)**

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Matches				
Kcal	2210	2279	1785	1986
Ideal Food Cost	K126,220	K135,845	K98,475	K99,700
Ideal Non Food Cost	K47,000	K51,950	K49,650	K49,300
School Expenses	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000
Cost of Living	<b>K199,220</b>	<b>K213,795</b>	<b>K174,125</b>	<b>K175,000</b>
Average Monthly Income	<b>K122,969</b>	<b>K132,425</b>	<b>K38,390</b>	<b>K102,510</b>

**AVERAGE TOTAL CROP PRODUCTION IN KG BETEWEEN MARCH AND JUNE 2023**

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Maize	<b>545Kg</b>	<b>305Kg</b>	<b>115Kg</b>	<b>20Kg</b>
Rice	14.4Kg	201Kg	0	61.5Kg
Cassava	0	0	0	0
Beans	21Kg	0	17.5Kg	15Kg
Soya	85Kg	0	0	0
Groundnuts	33Kg	258Kg	18.1Kg	53Kg
Sweet potatoes	0	0	0	0



### COPING MECHANISMS

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

### COMPARISON FOR MARCH AND JUNE 2023 RESULTS

	TA M'MBELWA (Mzimba)		TA KANYENDA (Nkhotakota)		TA TAMBALA (Dedza)		TA MASEYA (Chikwawa)	
	MARCH	JUNE	MARCH	JUNE	MARCH	JUNE	MARCH	JUNE
<b>Kilocalorie</b>	2145	2210	1978	2279	1545	1785	1782	1986
<b>Average Income</b>	80570	122,969	98,320	132,425	39,853	38,390	130,610	102,510
<b>Cost of Living</b>	195,950	199,220	198,025	213,795	186,780	174,125	169,490	175,000

Exchange Rate: 1USD = K1, 094.84. Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/>

The Social Conditions Research Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of June 2023 in TAsM'mbelwa in

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

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