



Centre for Social Concern

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

Ideal Food Cost

During the month of November 2023, the cost of ideal food items that make up to 1800 kilocalories was highest at K145, 900 in TA Kanyenda as compared to other areas, while TA Maseya in Chikwawa was the lowest at K124,700. This means that in November, in an ideal situation, a household in TA Kanyenda was supposed to have K145, 900 to buy food items which could have provided minimum kilocalories of 1800 but the average monthly income of K89,452 alone for TA Kanyenda was not enough to achieve this and also to spend on other basic items.

The Cost of Living

The cost of living, a summation of ideal food and nonfood costs, was highest (K236, 845) in TA Kanyenda in Nkhotakota and lowest in Dedza (K211, 800). This means that Nkhotakota households were supposed to have K236, 845 to buy both food and non-food items, however, they only managed to get K93,975 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 Mmbelwa in Mzimba worked in other people's fields as one of the coping mechanism for survival. 70% 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 60% 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 50% 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 Kanyenda in Nkhotakota and TA M'mbelwa in Mzimba consumed enough kilocalories (2025 and 1954 respectively) in the 4th quarter of 2023. However, households from TA Tambala in Dedza and TA Maseya in Chikwawa did not consume enough food that could have given them a minimum of 1800 Kcal. TA Tambala only got 1594 kilocalories.

COST OF IDEAL FOOD ITEMS FOR A FAMILY OF SIX FOR THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER 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	K800	K16,000	K800	K16,000	K750	K15,000	K800	16,000
Rice	10kg	K2,500	K25000	K2000	K20,000	K2,500	K25000	K2000	20000
Sugar	3kg	K1,800	K5,400	K1800	K5,400	K1,800	K5400	K2000	6000
Beans	7kg	K2,000	K14000	K1800	K12,600	K800	K5600	K1800	10,500
Eggs	40eggs	K200	K8000	K200	K8000	K200	K8000	K250	10,000
Goat meat	5kg	K5,000	K25,000	K5000	K25,000	K5000	K25,000	K4000	20000
Tomato	20	K1,000	K20000	K1600	K32000	K500	K10000	K500	10000
Mustard	15kg	K400	K6000	K513	K7695	K440	K6600	K400	6000
Cooking oil	3litres	K4,500	K10500	K4000	K12000	K4000	K12000	K3500	10500
Bananas	150	K100	K15000	K100	K15000	K100	K15000	K100	15,000
Salt	1kg	K1000	K1,000	K700	K700	K600	K600	K700	700
Kilocalories (Kcal)-FAO	Approx. 1800		K145,900		K154,395		K128,200		K124,700

AVERAGE KILO-CALORIE INTAKE PER PERSON PER DAY FOR NOVEMBER 2023

TRADITIONAL AREA	DISTRICT	ACTUAL AVERAGE KILO CALORIE INTAKE
Mmbelwa	Mzimba	1954
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	2025
Tambala	Dedza	1594
Maseya	Chikwawa	1798

IDEAL COST OF NON-FOOD ITEMS FOR NOVEMBER 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	K1500	K6,000	K1500	K6,000	K1300	K5,200	K1100	4,400
Nirma	15	K400	K6000	K350	K5250	K400	K6,000	K400	6,000
Clere	3	K500	K1500	K850	K2,550	K850	K2,550	K800	2,400
Glycerin	3	K500	K1500	K750	K2,250	K600	K1,800	K700	2,100
Body care	1	K3500	K3,500	K1500	K1500	K4000	K4,000	K3500	K3,500
Airtime	1	K4,500	K4500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	4,500
Phone Charging	10	K300	K3000	K100	K1000	K200	K2,000	K100	1,000
Charcoal	2	K6000	K12,000	K9000	K18000	K9000	K18,000	K12000	K24,000
Batteries	9	K600	K5400	K400	K3600	K400	K3,600	K400	3,600
Matches	9	K100	K900	K100	K900	K100	K900	K100	900
Kukonola	5	K1000	K5000	K800	K4,000	K600	K3,000	K700	3,500
Milling	5	K1000	K5000	K800	K4,000	K600	K3,000	K700	3,500
Bicycles	1	2,900	K2900	2,900	K2,900	K2,900	K2,900	K2,900	2,900
TOTALS			K57,200		K56,450		K57,450		62,300

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME FOR NOVEMBER 2023

INCOME SOURCE	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward from February	12550	7100	2210	9590
Casual labour	9967	17680	1534	22640
Small business	31750	23095	2850	21170
Loans from VSL	0	0	0	0
Loans from others	0	9770	1120	0
Usury/Katapila	0	14200	0	1500
Crop sales	15845	17800	10132	29905
Livestock/livestock products sales	35	0	450	7500
45Remittances	11600	2130	2865	0
Wage Labour	0	0	0	5200
Forest products	7705	2200	4520	1200
Selling planks	0	0	0	0
Firewood for selling	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	89,452	93,975	25,681	98,705

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

ITEM	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Kcal	1954	2025	1594	1798
Ideal Food Cost	K145,900	K154,395	K128,350	K124,700
Ideal Non Food Cost	K57,200	K56,450	K57,450	K62,300
School Expenses	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000
Cost of Living	K229,100	K236,845	K211,800	K213,000
Average Monthly Income	K89,452	K93,975	K25,681	K98,705

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	20	40	60	30
2	Selling household assets	0	10	20	0
3	Cooking grain meant for seed	10	10	10	20
4	Reducing portions at meal times	40	30	70	0
5	Reducing number of meals per day	20	30	60	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	50	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	35	0	10

"BUILDING RESILIENCE: MALAWI'S BATTLE AGAINST THE DUAL CHALLENGES OF ESCALATING EXPENSES AND MALNOURISHED FUTURES"

In the face of rising living costs and dwindling nutritional intake, the rural communities of Malawi, especially women and children, find themselves caught in a dire struggle for survival. The repercussions of this dual challenge are far-reaching, affecting not only the physical well-being but also the social fabric of these communities.

The high cost of living has imposed an unbearable burden on families, making it increasingly challenging to afford basic necessities. For the women who often serve as the backbone of these rural households, the weight of ensuring food security and meeting daily needs is particularly pronounced. Children, the hope for the nation's future, are growing up in an environment where access to essential nutrients is compromised. Reduced caloric intake not only threatens the physical health of these individuals but also hampers their ability to pursue education and contribute meaningfully to their communities. Malnutrition poses a direct threat to the development and potential of the next generation, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that must be broken.

In light of these challenges, it is imperative that the Malawi government takes proactive and decisive steps to alleviate the impact on its citizens. Centre for Social Concern calls upon the government to consider the following measures:

Subsidizing Essential Commodities

Implement targeted subsidies on essential food items to ease the financial burden on rural households, ensuring that families can access nutritious meals at affordable prices.

Investing in Agricultural Development

Channel resources into agricultural programs that empower rural communities, particularly women, to enhance food production and reduce dependency on external markets.

Strengthening Social Support Systems

Establish robust social safety nets, including nutritional assistance programs, to safeguard vulnerable populations, especially pregnant women and children, from the adverse effects of malnutrition.

Promoting Education on Nutrition

Launch comprehensive education campaigns in rural areas to raise awareness about the importance of balanced nutrition and empower communities to make informed dietary choices.

It is our collective responsibility to stand in solidarity with the people of Malawi, working towards a future where no one is left behind. By addressing the intertwined challenges of high living costs and reduced nutritional intake, we can build a more resilient and thriving nation for generations to come.

Together, let us nurture the roots for a healthier and brighter Malawi.

COMPARISON FOR MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER 2023 RESULTS

	TA M'MBELWA (Mzimba)				TA KANYENDA (Nkhotakota)				TA TAMBALA (Dedza)				TA MASEYA (Chikwawa)			
	March	June	Sept	Nov	March	June	Sept	Nov	March	June	Sept	Nov	March	June	Sept	Nov
Kilocalorie	2145	2210	2096	1954	1978	2279	2145	2025	1545	1785	1654	1594	1782	1986	1883	1798
Average Income	80570	122,969	104,869	89,452	98,320	132,425	97,825	93,975	39,853	38,390	29,462	25681	130,610	102,510	96,010	98,705
Cost of Living	195,950	199,220	219,220	229,100	198,025	213,795	229,295	236845	186780	174,125	184,425	211800	169,490	175,000	194,900	213,000

Exchange Rate: 1USD = K1, 692.35 Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/>

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

M'mbelwa in Mzimba; Kanyenda in Nkhotakota; Tambala in Dedza and Maseya in Chikwawa.

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