



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for January 2024



ANALYZING THE NUMBERS: DECODING THE RECENT SPIKE IN COST OF LIVING AND PROPOSED POLICY RESPONSES"

The average cost of living between December 2023 and January 2024 has increased by 7.8%, from an average cost of living of K455,707 in December 2023 to K491,037 in January 2024. Blantyre emerged as the most expensive city, with a cost of living of K564,524, followed by Zomba at K522,377. Conversely, Karonga was the least expensive city, with a cost of living of K401,760 in January 2024

*Centre for Reflection,
Research and Action on
Issues of Social Concern in
the Light of the Gospel and
the Church's Social
Teaching*

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Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	46,250	92,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	23,042	46,084
Milling (Including Grinding)	713	9,982	Protex	1,225	12,250
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,363	21,523	Boom	1,188	9,504
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,520	15,520	Clere Body Lotion	1,613	3,226
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	12,463	9,970	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,577	5,154
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	16,112	16,112
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,813	19,252	Running Water (meter)	15,166	15,166
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	183	8,784	Housing (3 bedroom)	78,964	78,964
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	953	21,443		Sub-Total	186,460
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,516	22,740	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		508,610
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,297	8,040	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	963	14,445	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	3,938	11,814	Secondary (fees) per year		58,500
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,488	29,760	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,363	18,904	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		24,465
Kitchen Salt	881	881	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		40,685
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	106	4,240	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		21,958
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	772	12,352		Sub-Total	148,608
	Sub-Total	322,150			

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	46,286	92,572	Charcoal (50 kgs)	20,429	40,858
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,700	17,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,000	19,200	Boom	1,157	9,256
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	8,571	8,571	Clere Body Lotion	1,671	3,342
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	8,429	6,743	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,200	6,400
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	16,379	16,379
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,500	18,000	Running Water (meter)	15,686	15,686
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	200	9,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	62,223	62,223
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,314	29,565		Sub-Total	171,144
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,693	40,395	Zomba Total Basic Needs		522,377
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,043	10,651	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,000	12,000	Secondary (fees) per year		81,827
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,700	21,600	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		53,209
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		57,069
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	164	6,560	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		18,714
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	986	15,776		Sub-Total	219,818
	Sub-Total	351,233			

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	49,286	98,572	Charcoal (50 kgs)	37,857	75,714
Milling (Including Grinding)	400	5,600	Protex	1,093	10,930
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,571	22,854	Boom	1,307	10,456
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	17,429	17,429	Clere Body Lotion	1,736	3,472
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	15,786	12,629	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,643	5,286
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	28,286	22,629	Electricity	16,935	16,935
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,500	18,000	Running Water (meter)	17,867	17,867
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	200	9,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	65,794	65,794
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	600	13,500	Sub-Total	206,454	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,257	33,855	Blantyre Total Basic Needs	564,524	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,900	6,650	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	971	14,565	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,057	12,171	Secondary (fees) per year		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,493	29,860	Primary (GPF) per year		
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,643	21,144	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		
Kitchen Salt	836	836	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	100	4,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	886	14,176	Sub-Total	173,472	
Sub-Total	358,070		Sub-Total	173,472	

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	34,167	68,334	Charcoal (50 kgs)	17,900	35,800
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,267	31,738	Protex	1,758	17,580
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,508	16,051	Boom	758	6,064
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,500	7,500	Clere Body Lotion	1,750	3,500
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	24,500	19,600	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,275	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	4,500	3,600	Electricity	7,455	7,455
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	6,508	6,508
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	213	10,224	Housing (3 bedroom)	37,350	37,350
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	965	21,713	Sub-Total	115,323	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,666	24,990	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs	448,559	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,793	6,276	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,233	12,699	Secondary (fees) per year		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,533	30,660	Primary (GPF) per year		
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,583	20,664	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		
Kitchen Salt	1,980	1,980	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	638	10,208	Sub-Total	281,049	
Sub-Total	333,236		Sub-Total	281,049	

Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		

Maize	48,000	96,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	6,500	13,000	
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,800	18,000	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,467	15,789	Boom	1,000	8,000	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	22,667	22,667	Clere Body Lotion	2,333	4,666	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	26,667	21,334	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,667	1,600	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	26,000	20,800	Electricity	9,213	9,213	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	9,712	9,712	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	250	12,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	38,591	38,591	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,207	27,158	Sub-Total	102,782		
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,133	31,995	Mangochi Total Basic Needs	500,389		
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,133	7,466	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,600	13,800	Secondary (fees) per year			69,363
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Primary (GPF) per year			4,627
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,800	22,400	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			57,713
Kitchen Salt	800	800	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			53,708
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			36,047
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	900	14,400	Sub-Total	221,458		
	Sub-Total	397,607				

Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for January 2024

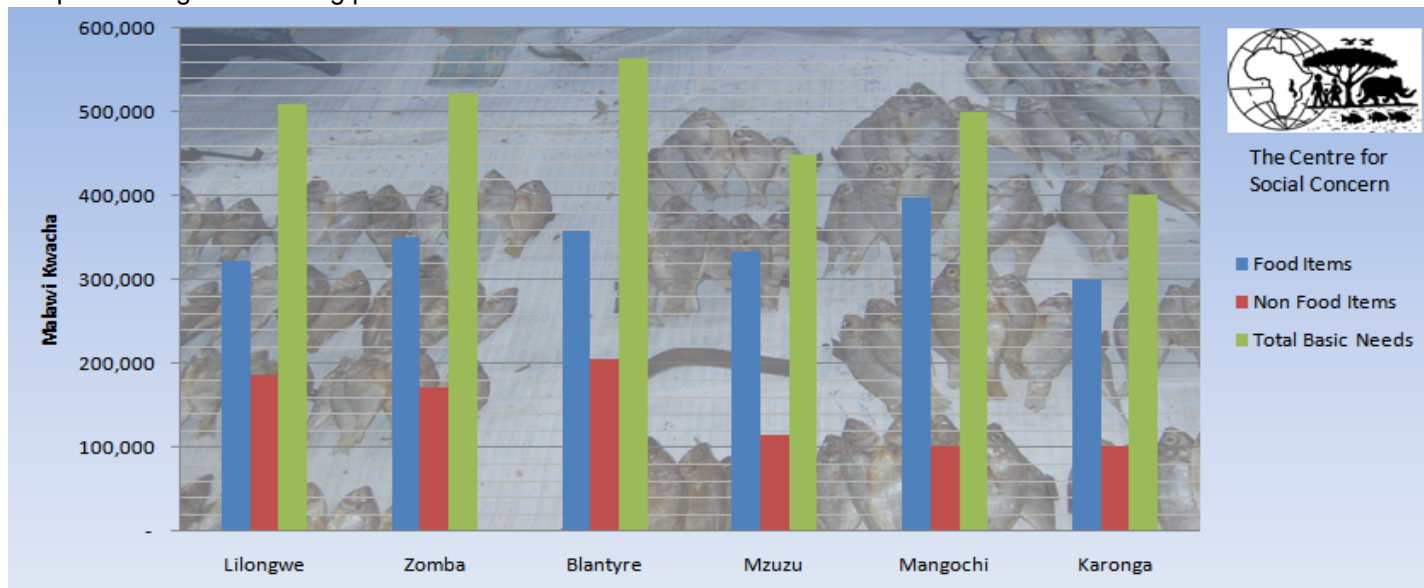
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS			
Maize	33,750	67,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	12,500	25,000	
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,150	11,500	
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,095	8,760	
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	6,000	6,000	Clere Body Lotion	2,450	4,900	
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,850	5,700	
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	6,000	4,800	Electricity	5,553	5,553	
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	7,814	7,814	
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	250	12,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	33,336	33,336	
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	800	18,000	Sub-Total	102,562		
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,075	31,125	Karonga Total Basic Needs	401,760		
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,775	6,213	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,550	23,250	Education			
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	3,547	10,641	Secondary (fees) per year			91,998
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,450	29,000	Primary (GPF) per year			7,488
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,600	20,800	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year			56,277
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year			75,278
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term			22,153
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Sub-Total	253,194		
	Sub-Total	299,199				

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	322,150	186,460	508,610

Zomba	351,233	171,144	522,377
Blantyre	358,070	206,454	564,524
Mzuzu	333,236	115,323	448,559
Mangochi	397,607	102,782	500,389
Karonga	299,199	102,562	401,760

Graph showing cost of living per district



Note: Total Basic Needs is calculated from Total Food Items + Total Non Food Items

FROM DECEMBER TO JANUARY: UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS BEHIND THE 7.8% SURGE IN COST OF LIVING"

The recent surge in the cost of living has raised concerns among citizens and policymakers alike. The substantial increment in prices for various goods and services has prompted a closer examination of the factors contributing to this phenomenon.

Several factors have been identified as potential drivers for the rise in the cost of living, including economic conditions, supply and demand dynamics, market variations, external shocks, government policies, seasonal fluctuations, energy costs, currency exchange rates, and global market trends.

These factors collectively underscore the need for a comprehensive approach to address the challenges posed by the escalating cost of living. In light of these developments, the impact on low-income earners deserves particular attention.

Impact on Low-Income Earners

Low-income individuals and families are disproportionately affected by rising living costs. Basic necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare constitute a more substantial portion of their income. The current economic landscape exacerbates financial strains on vulnerable populations, making it imperative to implement targeted measures to alleviate their burden.

Short-Term Measures

Social Assistance Programs

Enhance existing social assistance programs to provide immediate relief to low-income families, ensuring access to essential services and resources.

Subsidies

Consider targeted subsidies for basic commodities, particularly food items and utilities, to mitigate the impact of price increases on essential goods.

Minimum Wage Adjustments

Review and potentially adjust minimum wage rates to reflect the increased cost of living, thereby improving the financial well-being of low-income workers. The recent adjustments in minimum wage has been unsatisfactory if we compare the economic hardships the low income earners are going through.

Long-Term Strategies

Skill Development and Employment Opportunities

Invest in skill development programs and job creation initiatives to empower low-income individuals, enabling them to access better-paying employment opportunities.

Affordable Housing

Implement measures to address housing affordability, such as promoting affordable housing projects and rental assistance programs.

Economic Diversification: Foster economic diversification to reduce dependence on specific sectors and enhance overall economic resilience, helping to mitigate the impact of external shocks.

Social Safety Nets: Strengthen social safety nets to provide a robust support system during times of economic uncertainty, ensuring that vulnerable populations are shielded from severe financial hardships.

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL CONCERN COMMENDS GOVERNMENT FOR MITIGATING COST OF LIVING CHALLENGES

In the latest report on the cost of living in Malawi for January 2024, the Centre for Social Concern notes a slightly slowed increase in living costs. This positive development is attributed to the government's commendable efforts in distributing maize to vulnerable Malawians.

The strategic distribution of maize has had a noteworthy impact on the supply chain, contributing to a slight increase in maize availability. As a result, this has led to a marginal reduction in maize prices, consequently alleviating some of the financial burdens on the citizens.

The Centre for Social Concern acknowledges and commends the government's proactive measures to address the challenges faced by the people. The targeted distribution of essential goods, such as maize, demonstrates a commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and easing the economic strain on households.

While recognizing this positive step, the Centre for Social Concern emphasizes the importance of continued collaboration between the government, civil society, and the private sector to sustain these efforts. Ongoing initiatives to stabilize and enhance the supply chain for essential commodities will play a crucial role in fostering long-term economic resilience.

The Centre for Social Concern remains dedicated to monitoring and analyzing economic trends, advocating for policies that prioritize the well-being of the Malawian people, and collaborating with stakeholders to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Monthly Average for Cost of Living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2024
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
Amount (MK)	356,108	372,471	405,669	385,848	377,892	378,812	395,993	386,192	389,455	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037

Fuel Cost

Fuel (cost at the pump)	
Diesel (per litre)	K2734
Petrol (per litre)	K2530
Paraffin (per litre)	K1910

Minibus Fare

Minibus fare to town and back	
Lilongwe	K3000
Zomba	K1400
Blantyre	K1200
Mzuzu	K1600
Karonga	K1900
Mangochi	K1000

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 686.78 Malawian Kwacha (MK). Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/> : The Social Conditions Research Programme of the Centre for Social Concern
 Conducted these surveys from 24th to 25th January, 2024 in the cities of Blantyre, Zomba, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and peri-urban areas of Karonga and Mangochi

NOTE: The data on electricity, housing, water and other additional costs is collected and analyzed on quarterly basis