



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for February 2024



INSIGHTFUL ANALYSIS OF MAIZE PRICES IMPACT ON COST OF LIVING

In the dynamic landscape of economic fluctuations, the Centre for Social Concern has conducted an insightful study shedding light on the pivotal role of maize prices in shaping the cost of living across various regions of Malawi. The findings unveil a nuanced narrative, illustrating the intricate interplay between market dynamics and household expenses.

Lilongwe cost of living for a household of six people for February 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	39,750	79,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	29,375	58,750
Milling (Including Grinding)	763	10,682	Protex	1,250	12,500
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,863	24,723	Boom	1,181	9,448
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	15,500	15,500	Clere Body Lotion	1,550	3,100
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	14,500	11,600	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,550	5,100
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	16,112	16,112
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,125	20,500	Running Water (meter)	15,166	15,166
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	200	9,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	78,964	78,964
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	850	19,125		Sub-Total	199,140
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,256	18,840	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		509,993
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,575	9,013	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	975	14,625	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,013	12,039	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)	2,531	20,248	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		24,465
Kitchen Salt	850	850	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		40,685
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	281	11,240	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		21,958
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	188	3,008		Sub-Total	148,608
	Sub-Total	310,853		Sub-Total	148,608

Zomba cost of living for a household of six people for February 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		

Maize	46,286	92,572	Charcoal (50 kgs)	22,571	45,142
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,700	17,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,671	23,494	Boom	1,157	9,256
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	8,714	8,714	Clere Body Lotion	1,629	3,258
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	8,714	6,971	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,171	6,342
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	16,379	16,379
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	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	757	17,033	Sub-Total	175,286	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,157	32,355	Zomba Total Basic Needs	516,657	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,957	6,850			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	3,986	11,958	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year		81,827
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,000	24,000	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		53,209
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	164	6,560	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		57,069
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,329	21,264	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		18,714
Sub-Total	341,371		Sub-Total	219,818	

Blantyre cost of living for a household of six people for February 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	47,500	95,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	57,143	114,286
Milling (Including Grinding)	400	5,600	Protex	1,150	11,500
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,971	25,414	Boom	1,321	10,568
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	19,571	19,571	Clere Body Lotion	1,757	3,514
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	17,000	13,600	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,786	5,572
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	27,714	22,171	Electricity	16,935	16,935
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,571	18,284	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	614	13,815	Sub-Total	246,036	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,071	31,065	Blantyre Total Basic Needs	608,917	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,229	7,802			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	979	14,685	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		

Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,086	12,258	Education	
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,493	29,860	Secondary (fees) per year	37,732
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,643	21,144	Primary (GPF) per year	5,451
Kitchen Salt	836	836	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	59,375
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	100	4,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	49,011
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,136	18,176	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	21,904
	Sub-Total	362,881	Sub-Total	173,472

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for February 2024				
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS	
Maize	35,000	70,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	19,250 38,500
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,267	31,738	Protex	2,158 21,580
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,508	16,051	Boom	783 6,264
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,500	7,500	Clere Body Lotion	1,833 3,666
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	25,333	20,266	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,475 1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	4,917	3,934	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	225	10,800	Housing (3 bedroom)	37,350 37,350
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,072	24,120		Sub-Total 122,389
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,107	31,605	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs 478,825	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,817	6,360	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS	
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,167	17,505	Education	
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,267	12,801	Secondary (fees) per year	60,000
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,567	31,340	Primary (GPF) per year	4,580
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,467	27,736	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	57,000
Kitchen Salt	2,216	2,216	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	47,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	18,770
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	529	8,464		
	Sub-Total	356,436	Sub-Total	281,049

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

Maize	42,000	84,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	8,000	16,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	2,000	20,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,400	15,360	Boom	1,000	8,000
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	18,333	18,333	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	24,667	19,734	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,500	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	25,000	20,000	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	1,133	25,493	Sub-Total		108,116
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,150	32,250	Mangochi Total Basic Needs	484,771	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,967	6,885			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,667	14,001	Education		
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year	69,363	
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,800	22,400	Primary (GPF) per year	4,627	
Kitchen Salt	800	800	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	57,713	
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	300	12,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	53,708	
Cassava /potatoes (2KgX2Bkfst/)	900	14,400	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	36,047	
Sub-Total	376,655		Sub-Total	221,458	

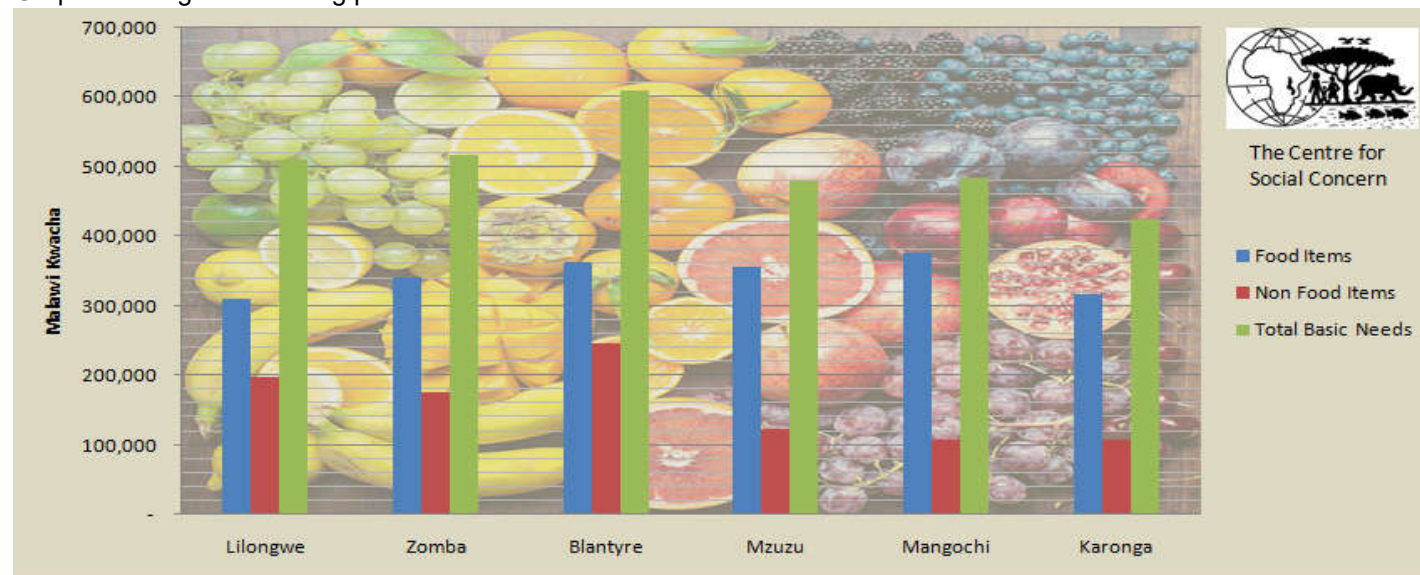
Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for February 2024					
A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	38,250	76,500	Charcoal (50 kgs)	14,700	29,400
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,200	12,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,095	8,760
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,000	7,000	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		107,462
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,225	33,375	Karonga Total Basic Needs	424,092	
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,860	6,510			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,575	23,625	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	3,650	10,950	Education		

Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year	91,998
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,000	24,000	Primary (GPF) per year	7,488
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year	56,277
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	200	8,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year	75,278
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term	22,153
	Sub-Total	316,630	Sub-Total	253,194

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	310,853	199,140	509,993
Zomba	341,371	175,286	516,657
Blantyre	362,881	246,036	608,917
Mzuzu	356,436	122,389	478,825
Mangochi	376,655	108,116	484,771
Karonga	316,630	107,462	424,092

Graph showing cost of living per district

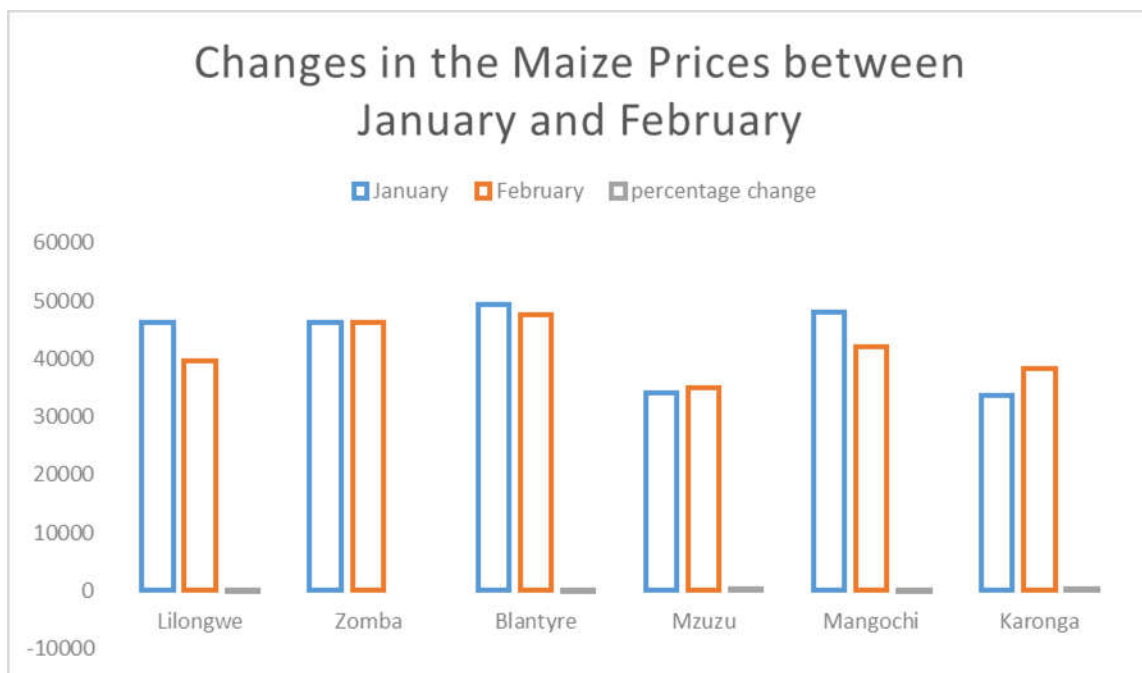


Note: Total Basic Needs is calculated from Total Food Items + Total Non Food Items

NOTABLE MODERATION IN THE COST OF LIVING

Between January and February 2024, the cost of living exhibited a notable moderation, with a 2.6% increase, in stark contrast to the preceding period from December 2023 to January 2024, where a substantial surge of 7.8% was observed. Delving deeper, it becomes evident that maize, a staple commodity deeply entrenched in Malawian livelihoods, stands as the linchpin influencing these fluctuations.

The graphical representation below encapsulates the essence of this study, showcasing the percentage change in maize prices across key regions:



Key Observations:

Lilongwe: Experienced a significant downturn of 16.4% in maize prices from January to February 2024, exerting downward pressure on the cost of living in the region.

Zomba: Maintained stability with maize prices remaining unchanged, indicating a neutral impact on the cost of living.

Blantyre: Witnessed a modest decline of 3.8% in maize prices, contributing to a slight alleviation in household expenses.

Mzuzu: Recorded a marginal increase of 2.4% in maize prices, exerting a mild upward pressure on the cost of living.

Mangochi: Experienced a notable decrease of 14.3% in maize prices, potentially alleviating financial burdens for residents in the area.

Karonga: Emerged as a focal point with a significant surge of 11.8% in maize prices, likely amplifying the cost of living for households.

The fluctuations in maize prices underscore its pivotal role as a determinant of the cost of living in Malawi. Understanding these dynamics empowers policymakers and stakeholders to devise targeted interventions aimed at mitigating economic vulnerabilities and fostering sustainable livelihoods for communities across the nation.

SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS BY CENTRE FOR SOCIAL CONCERN TO PERMANENTLY SUSTAIN LOW MAIZE PRICES

Reducing maize prices and ensuring a continual reduction in the cost of living among low-income earners in Malawi requires a multi-faceted approach that involves various government policies and interventions. Here are several measures that the Malawian government could consider:

Agricultural Subsidies

Continue and possibly expand agricultural subsidies to maize farmers to increase production and reduce the cost of production. This could include subsidies for fertilizers, seeds, and irrigation systems.

Investment in Infrastructure

Improve rural infrastructure such as roads, storage facilities, and irrigation systems to enhance agricultural productivity and reduce post-harvest losses, which can help stabilize prices.

Market Regulation

Regulate the maize market to prevent price manipulation by middlemen and traders. Implement measures to ensure fair pricing and reduce market distortions.

Market Information Systems

Establish and maintain effective market information systems to provide farmers with timely information on market prices, demand trends, and input prices. This empowers farmers to make informed decisions about production and marketing.

Diversification of Agriculture

Encourage diversification of agricultural production beyond maize to reduce dependency on a single crop and mitigate the impact of maize price fluctuations on the cost of living.

Promotion of Value-Added Activities

Encourage value addition in the agricultural sector through processing and packaging of maize and other agricultural products. This can create additional income opportunities for farmers and contribute to price stabilization.

Social Safety Nets

Implement social safety nets such as cash transfer programs or subsidized food distribution for vulnerable populations to cushion the impact of high food prices on low-income earners.

Improving Access to Finance

Facilitate access to credit and financial services for smallholder farmers to enable them to invest in modern farming techniques, inputs, and equipment, thus increasing productivity and reducing costs.

Research and Extension Services

Invest in agricultural research and extension services to promote the adoption of improved farming practices, crop varieties, and technologies that enhance productivity and resilience to climate change.

Collaboration with Development Partners

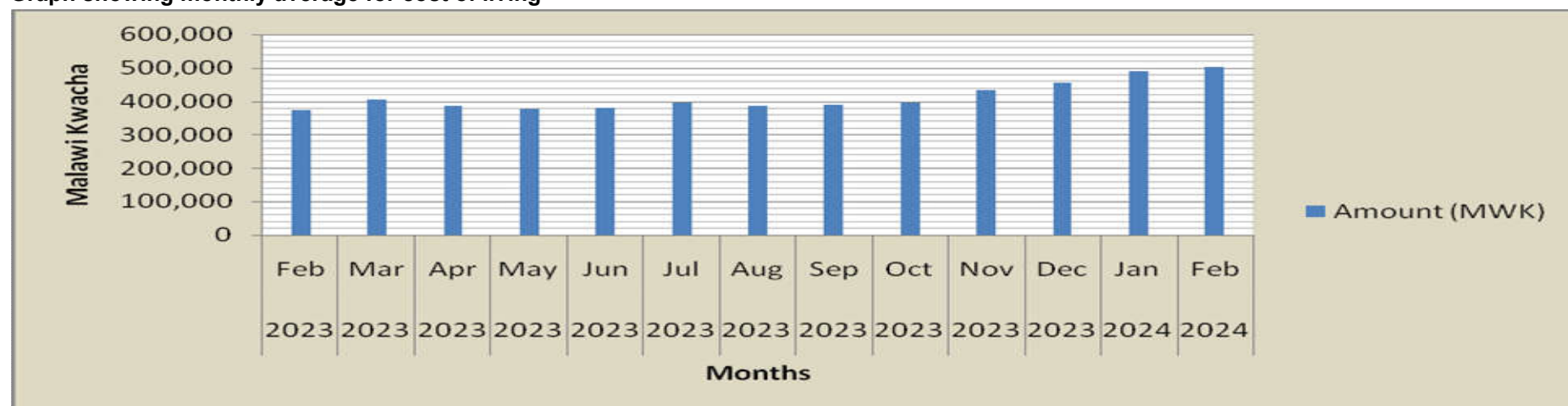
Partner with international organizations, NGOs, and development agencies to mobilize resources and technical assistance for agricultural development programs aimed at reducing poverty and improving food security.

By implementing a combination of these measures, the Malawian government can work towards ensuring a sustained reduction in maize prices and the overall cost of living for low-income earners in the country.

Monthly average for cost of living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Amount (MK)	372,471	405,669	385,848	377,892	378,812	395,993	386,192	389,455	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876

Graph showing monthly average for cost of living



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, 745.42 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 21st to 22nd February, 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