



CfSC

The Centre for Social Concern

Basic Needs Basket

Cost of Living for March 2024



ADDRESSING THE DYNAMICS OF COST OF LIVING IN MALAWI: A CALL FOR STRATEGIC MEASURES

The Centre for Social Concern (CfSC) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the cost of living in March 2024. Focusing on the period between February and March 2024, our findings reveal a notable increase in the average cost of living, with expenditures rising from K503, 873 in February to K510, 720 in March, marking a 1.4% increase.

*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 March 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	41,125	82,250	Charcoal (50 kgs)	28,125	56,250
Milling (Including Grinding)	800	11,200	Protex	1,250	12,500
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,813	24,403	Boom	1,175	9,400
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	10,049	10,049	Clere Body Lotion	1,513	3,026
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	11,136	8,909	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,625	5,250
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	14,973	14,973
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	12,809	12,809
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	198	9,504	Housing (3 bedroom)	80,221	80,221
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	875	19,688	Sub-Total	194,429	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,549	23,235	Lilongwe Total Basic Needs		526,224
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	3,043	10,651	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	969	14,535	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,163	12,489	Secondary (fees) per year		58,500
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	1,625	32,500	Primary (GPF) per year		3,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,125	25,000	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		24,465
Kitchen Salt	863	863	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		40,685
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	263	10,520	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		21,958
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Sub-Total	148,608	
Sub-Total	331,795				

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	50,229	100,458	Charcoal (50 kgs)	15,500	31,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,000	14,000	Protex	1,700	17,000
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,743	23,955	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	3,414	6,828
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Electricity	15,745	15,745
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	14,443	14,443
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	200	9,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	70,520	70,520
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	657	14,783	Sub-Total	168,050	
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	1,786	26,790	Zomba Total Basic Needs		508,715
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,457	5,100	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,000	15,000	Education		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,029	12,087	Secondary (fees) per year		81,827
Bread (5 bkfst/ wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Primary (GPF) per year		9,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,457	27,656	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		53,209
Kitchen Salt	1,000	1,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		57,069
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	151	6,040	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		18,714
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,157	18,512	Sub-Total	219,818	
Sub-Total	340,665				

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

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	45,000	90,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	55,714	111,428
Milling (Including Grinding)	400	5,600	Protex	1,293	12,930
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	3,971	25,414	Boom	1,321	10,568
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	22,143	22,143	Clere Body Lotion	1,757	3,514
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	18,000	14,400	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,786	5,572
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	26,429	21,143	Electricity	19,558	19,558
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	4,571	18,284	Running Water (meter)	17,399	17,399
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	200	9,600	Housing (3 bedroom)	67,931	67,931
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	586	13,185	Sub-Total		248,900
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,143	32,145	Blantyre Total Basic Needs		612,273
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,314	8,099			
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)	2,843	22,744	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/)	1,186	18,976	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		21,904
Sub-Total		363,373	Sub-Total		173,472

Mzuzu cost of living for a household of six people for March 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	34,417	68,834	Charcoal (50 kgs)	18,683	37,366
Milling (Including Grinding)	2,400	33,600	Protex	2,158	21,580
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	2,508	16,051	Boom	808	6,464
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,500	7,500	Clere Body Lotion	1,867	3,734
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	25,333	20,266	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,500	1,066
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	4,917	3,934	Electricity	8,314	8,314
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	6,000	24,000	Running Water (meter)	6,761	6,761
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	217	10,416	Housing (3 bedroom)	39,512	39,512
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,079	24,278	Sub-Total		124,797
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,270	34,050	Mzuzu Total Basic Needs		485,844
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,972	6,902			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	1,167	17,505	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	4,217	12,651	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,600	32,000	Secondary (fees) per year		60,000
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,617	28,936	Primary (GPF) per year		4,580
Kitchen Salt	2,236	2,236	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		57,000
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		46,900
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	493	7,888	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		18,770
Sub-Total		361,047	Sub-Total		281,049

Mangochi cost of living for a household of six people for March 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	40,000	80,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	16,633	33,266
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	15,333	15,333	Clere Body Lotion	2,500	5,000
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	18,667	14,934	Vaseline Blue Seal	3,500	1,600
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	19,000	15,200	Electricity	9,170	9,170
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	9,543	9,543
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	250	12,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	42,944	42,944
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	1,567	35,258	Sub-Total		129,523
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,057	30,855	Mangochi Total Basic Needs		501,099
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	1,800	6,300			
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 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,500	30,000	Secondary (fees) per year		69,363
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	2,933	23,464	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/)	1,067	17,072	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		36,047
Sub-Total		371,576	Sub-Total		221,458

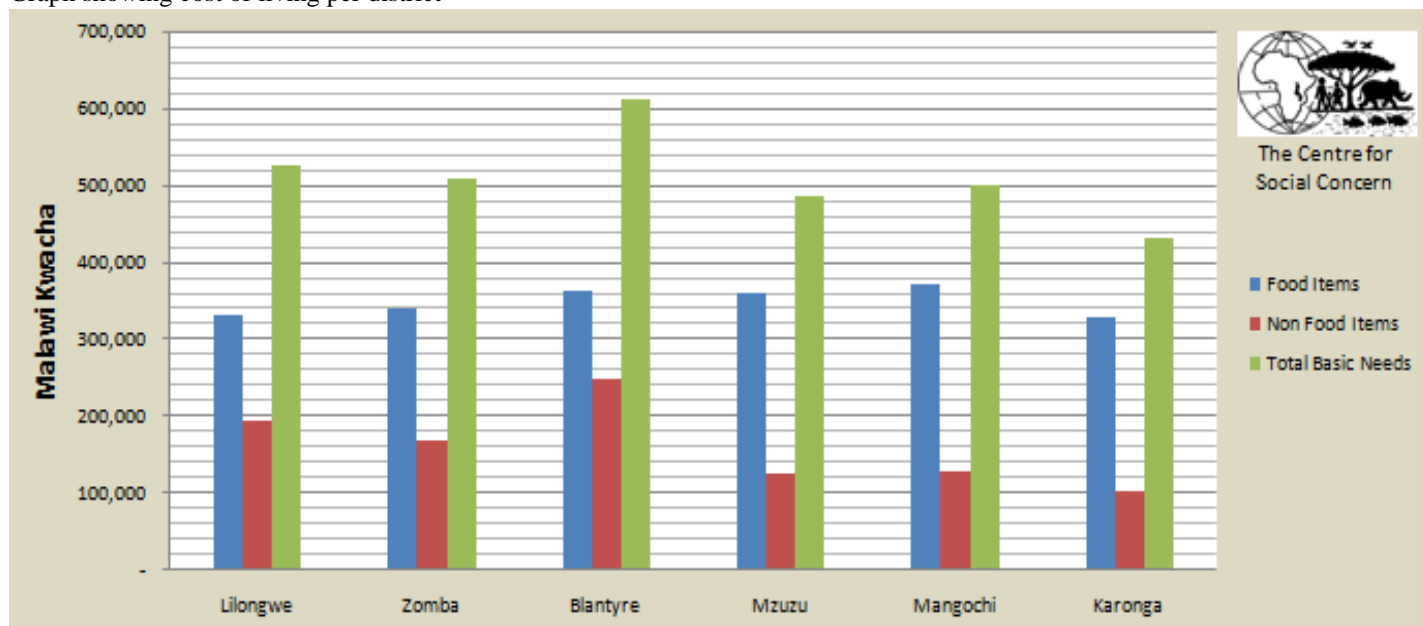
Karonga cost of living for a household of six people for March 2024

A. FOOD ITEMS			B. NON FOOD ITEMS		
Maize	30,000	60,000	Charcoal (50 kgs)	9,000	18,000
Milling (Including Grinding)	1,500	21,000	Protex	1,175	11,750
Beans (0.8kg/day) 8 Days	700	4,480	Boom	1,548	12,384
Dry Usipa (250g/day) 4 days	7,000	7,000	Clere Body Lotion	3,600	7,200
Dry Utaka/Mcheni (200g/day) 4 days	0	0	Vaseline Blue Seal	2,875	5,750
Kapenta (200g/day) 4 days	8,000	6,400	Electricity	5,580	5,580
Beef(1 kg/day) 4 days	5,000	20,000	Running Water (meter)	8,498	8,498
Eggs (12/day) 4 days	250	12,000	Housing (3 bedroom)	32,958	32,958
Rape (750g/day) for 30 days	830	18,675	Sub-Total		102,120
Tomato (0.5 Kg/day) 30 days	2,350	35,250	Karonga Total Basic Needs		430,165
Onion (116g/day) 30 days	2,340	8,190			
Fresh Milk (250ml/day) 30 days	2,650	39,750	C. SOME OTHER ADDITIONAL COSTS		
Kazinga Cooking oil (100mls/day)30 days	3,970	11,910	Education		
Bread (5 bkfsts / wk) 20 days	1,550	31,000	Secondary (fees) per year		91,998
Sugar (2 Kgs /Week)	3,250	26,000	Primary (GPF) per year		7,488
Kitchen Salt	390	390	Uniform/shoes (Primary) per year		56,277
Tea leaves (Chisangalalo)	250	10,000	Uniform/shoes (Secondary) per year		75,278
Cassava /potatoes (2Kgx2Bkfst/)	1,000	16,000	Other (pens, books, etc.) per term		22,153
Sub-Total		328,045	Sub-Total		253,194

Table showing cost of living per district

District	Food Items	Non Food Items	Total Basic Needs
Lilongwe	331,795	194,429	526,224
Zomba	340,665	168,050	508,715
Blantyre	363,373	248,900	612,273
Mzuzu	361,047	124,797	485,844
Mangochi	371,576	129,523	501,099
Karonga	328,045	102,120	430,165

Graph showing cost of living per district



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

CHANGES IN THE AVERAGE COST OF LIVING BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2024

During this period, the cost fluctuations of essential commodities within the Basic Needs Basket underscored a mixed trend. While certain items witnessed a decline in prices, such as maize (-3.5%), beans (-2%), and usipa (-6.4%), others experienced significant increments. Notably, rape vegetables surged by 4.6%, tomatoes by 3.6%, onions by 2.3%, charcoal by 4%, and sugar by a substantial 10.4%.

The implications of these shifts in the cost of living are profound and multifaceted, impacting various facets of societal well-being. Particularly, the increased financial burden on households could exacerbate economic vulnerability, widen socio-economic disparities, and impede access to basic necessities for vulnerable populations. Moreover, the inflationary pressure on essential commodities may strain household budgets, limiting spending capacity and hindering long-term financial stability.

In light of these challenges, the CfSC calls upon the Malawi government to adopt strategic measures aimed at mitigating the escalating cost of living. Such measures should encompass a multi-dimensional approach, including:

Enhanced Agricultural Productivity

Investing in agricultural innovation, technology, and infrastructure to bolster production and stabilize prices of staple foods.

Price Stabilization Mechanisms

Implementing effective price control mechanisms and market interventions to regulate the costs of essential commodities and prevent arbitrary price hikes.

Social Safety Nets

Expanding social protection programs and safety nets to shield vulnerable populations from the adverse effects of inflation and economic volatility.

Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods

Fostering initiatives for income generation, employment creation, and entrepreneurship to enhance household resilience and mitigate the impact of rising living costs.

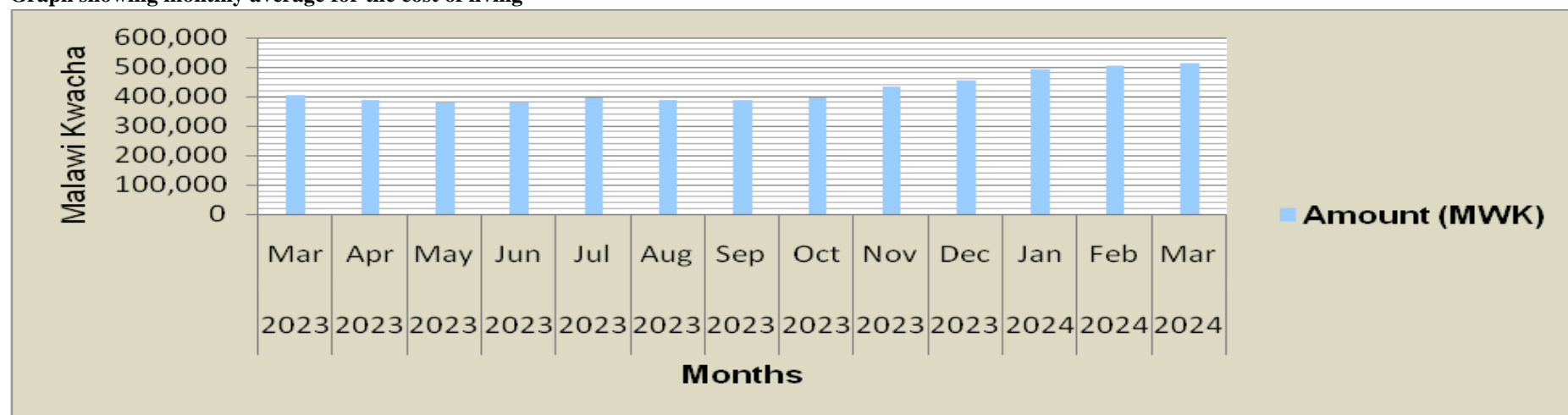
The CfSC emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts between the government, civil society, private sector, and international partners to address the root causes of the escalating cost of living and ensure sustainable socio-economic development for all Malawians.

As a nation, we must remain vigilant and proactive in our pursuit of equitable economic growth and inclusive development, prioritizing policies and interventions that prioritize the welfare and prosperity of every citizen.

Monthly average for the cost of living

Monthly Average	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024
	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Amount (MK)	405,669	385,848	377,892	378,812	395,993	386,192	389,455	397,134	433,793	455,707	491,037	503,876	510,720

Graph showing monthly average for the 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	K 1600
Mangochi	K1000
Karonga	K1900

NB: 1 USA dollar (\$) = K1, 750.63 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 19th to 21st March, 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