



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 April 2024, the cost of ideal food items that make up to 1800 kilocalories was highest at K154,795 in TA Kanyenda as compared to other areas, while TA M'mbelwa in Mzimba was the lowest at K124,500. This means that in April, in an ideal situation, a household in TA Kanyenda was supposed to have K154,795 to buy food items which could have provided minimum kilocalories of 1800 but the average monthly income of K91,011 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 (K235,200) in TA Maseya in Chikwawa and lowest in Mzimba (K207,810). This means that Chikwawa households were supposed to have K235,200 to buy both food and non-food items, however, they only managed to get K96,255 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 in all TAs consumed enough kilocalories in the 1st quarter of 2024. This is also the same period when people harvest their crops.

COST OF IDEAL FOOD ITEMS FOR A FAMILY OF SIX FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2024

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	K400	K8,000	K500	K10,000	K600	K12,000	K600	12,000
Rice	10kg	K2,500	K25000	K2000	K20,000	K2,500	K25000	K2000	20000
Sugar	3kg	K4,000	K12,000	K4000	K12,400	K4000	K12000	K2800	8400
Beans	7kg	K2,000	K14000	K1800	K12,000	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	K750	K700	700
Kilocalories (Kcal)-FAO	Approx. 1800		K124,500		K154,795		K128,350		K131,950

AVERAGE KILO-CALORIE INTAKE PER PERSON PER DAY FOR APRIL 2024

TRADITIONAL AREA	DISTRICT	ACTUAL AVERAGE KILO CALORIE INTAKE
Mmbelwa	Mzimba	2018
Kanyenda	Nkhotakota	2021
Tambala	Dedza	1934
Maseya	Chikwawa	2004

IDEAL COST OF NON-FOOD ITEMS FOR APRIL 2024

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	K1600	K6,400	K1600	6,400
Nirma	15	K400	K6000	K400	K6,000	K400	K6,000	K400	6,000
Clere	3	K500	K1500	K1200	K3600	K850	K2,550	K1100	3,300
Glycerin	3	K500	K1500	K800	K2,400	K600	K1,800	K1000	3,000
Body care	1	K3500	K3,500	K1500	K1,500	K4000	K4,000	K4200	4,200
Airtime	1	K4,500	K4500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	K4,500	4,500
Phone Charging	10	K300	K3000	K200	K2000	K200	K2,000	K200	2,000
Charcoal	2	K6000	K12,000	K6000	K12000	K9000	K18,000	K15000	30,000
Batteries	9	K600	K5400	K500	K4500	K400	K3,600	K400	3,600
Matches	9	K100	K900	K100	K900	K100	K900	K150	1350
Kukonola	5	K1000	K5000	K800	K4,000	K600	K3,000	K1000	5000
Milling	5	K1000	K5000	K800	K4,000	K600	K3,000	K1000	5000
Bicycles	1	2,900	K2900	2,900	K2,900	K2,900	K2,900	K2,900	2,900
TOTALS			K57,200		K54,300		K58,650		77,250

AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME FOR APRIL 2024

INCOME SOURCE	TA M'MBELWA	TA KANYENDA	TA TAMBALA	TA MASEYA
Cash Brought Forward from February	136765	8100	3210	9590
Casual labour	10545	16456	2542	23100
Small business	31750	22880	2722	21045
Loans from VSL	0	0	0	0
Loans from others	0	10788	2100	0
Usury/Katapila	0	12448	0	1500
Crop sales	14223	15009	9243	28453
Livestock sales	35	0	555	7129
45Remittances	10776	3200	2534	0
Wage Labour	0	0	0	4535
Forest products	8805	2130	5210	903
Selling planks	0	0	0	0
Firewood for selling	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	212,899	91,011	28,116	96,255

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	2018	2021	1934	2001
Ideal Food Cost	K124,500	K154,795	K128,350	K131,950
Ideal Non Food Cost	K57,200	K54,300	K58,650	K77,250
School Expenses	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000	K26,000
Cost of Living	K207,700	K235,095	K213,000	K235,200
Average Monthly Income	K212,899	K91,011	K28,116	K96,255

COPING MECHANISMS

	Type of Coping Mechanisms followed	M'mbelwa(MZ) % households	Kanyenda (KK) % households	Tambala(DZ) % households	Maseya(CK) % 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	0	0	10

IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMING ENOUGH KILOCALORIES PER DAY FOR RURAL MALAWIANS

Health and Well-being

1. **Energy for Agricultural Work:** Most rural Malawians are engaged in farming and need adequate energy for their physically demanding work. Insufficient caloric intake can lead to fatigue and decreased productivity.
2. **Nutritional Sufficiency:** Ensuring enough kcal intake helps prevent malnutrition, which is prevalent in rural areas. This includes essential nutrients that support overall health and well-being.
3. **Growth and Development:** For children and adolescents in rural areas, sufficient kcal intake is essential for proper growth, cognitive development, and future health.
4. **Prevention of Malnutrition:** Addressing caloric deficiencies can reduce malnutrition-related health issues, such as increased susceptibility to diseases and impaired immune function.

Government Actions to Ensure Sufficient Kilocalorie Consumption in Rural Malawi

Direct Interventions

1. **Food Assistance Programs:** Expand food assistance programs like the School Feeding Program and social cash transfers to ensure that vulnerable rural populations, especially children, receive adequate nutrition.
2. **Subsidies for Essential Foods:** Implement subsidies for staple foods such as maize, rice, and legumes to make them more affordable for low-income rural households.

Policy and Regulation

1. **Nutritional Guidelines and Education:** Launch public health campaigns to educate rural Malawians about the importance of balanced diets and adequate kcal intake, focusing on locally available nutritious foods.

Infrastructure and Support

1. **Support Local Agriculture:** Encourage and support local agriculture through subsidies, training, and access to farming inputs to increase food production and lower food prices in rural areas.
2. **Improve Food Distribution:** Develop infrastructure to improve food distribution networks, reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring food reaches all rural regions.

Reducing the Gap Between Income and Cost of Living in Rural Malawi

Economic Policies

1. **Progressive Taxation:** Implement progressive tax policies to reduce income inequality, ensuring higher earners contribute more, which can be used to support low-income rural families.
2. **Universal Basic Income:** Explore the feasibility of a universal basic income (UBI) to provide a safety net, ensuring all rural Malawians can meet their basic needs, including food.

Employment and Wages

1. **Living Wage Legislation:** Ensure that the minimum wage is set at a level that reflects the true cost of living in rural areas, allowing workers to afford necessities such as food, housing, and healthcare.

2. **Job Creation Programs:** Invest in job creation programs, particularly in agriculture and rural-based industries, to provide stable, well-paying jobs for rural populations.

Social Services and Benefits

1. **Housing Assistance:** Provide affordable housing options to reduce the financial burden on low-income rural families, allowing more of their income to be spent on food and other essentials.
2. **Healthcare Access:** Expand access to affordable healthcare in rural areas to reduce medical expenses, enabling families to allocate more resources to other needs, including food.

Long-term Strategies

Education and Skill Development

1. **Invest in Education:** Improve access to quality education and vocational training in rural areas to enhance job prospects and earning potential for rural Malawians.
2. **Financial Literacy Programs:** Offer programs that teach financial management skills, helping individuals better manage their resources and make informed decisions about spending and saving.

Community Support and Engagement

1. **Community Development:** Invest in community development projects that create supportive environments for low-income rural families, including access to community centers, childcare, and transportation.
2. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between the government, non-profits, and private sectors to address food security and cost of living challenges in rural areas holistically.

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

Exchange Rate: 1USD = K1, 744.95 Source: <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/>

The Social Conditions Research Programme of the CfSC conducted these quarterly surveys in the month of April 2024 in TAsM'mbelwa in

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

Centre for Social Concern, P.O. Box 40049, Kanengo, Lilongwe 4. Tel; 265-1-715-632